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Noble or Malevolent in a Moment of Dismay: How Postsecondary Students Construe and Characterize Bystander Action in School Violence Shooting Incidents

Dyan Whitlow Underhill
University of Denver

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NOBLE OR MALEVOLENT IN A MOMENT OF DISMAY: HOW
POSTSECONDARY STUDENTS CONSTRUE AND CHARACTERIZE BYSTANDER
ACTION IN SCHOOL VIOLENCE SHOOTING INCIDENTS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Dyan Whitlow Underhill
November 2012
Advisor: Dr. Franklin A. Tuitt
ABSTRACT

Multiple incidents of postsecondary school shooting violence have occurred in American society—prompting concern about safety on college campuses, administrators’ roles in prevention, and proactive and responsible bystander actions. Active shooter plans have become more established in educational environments, with efforts directed toward both the perpetrator and the victims. Limited information, however, has been provided regarding how bystanders would, or even should, construe and characterize their roles in such incidents. Numerous professional and governmental researchers in organizations throughout the United States (e.g., the Center for Disease Control Injury Center, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, National Consortium on Violence Research-Carnegie Mellon University, and the Violence Prevention Research Program-University of California, Davis) have identified that prevention remains the best action. The American Colleges Health Association (ACHA) leaders asked postsecondary educational institutions’ leaders to become engaged more actively in prevention efforts. In the current study, the researcher’s own reconditioned hermeneutic design was used to examine appropriate bystander action during an incident of school shooting violence based on an Adapted Social Systems Model. Internal and external socioeconomic factors with influence on student bystander action were addressed. School administrators might find insight from the findings, implications, and
future directions for research as discussed. The results include a framework for the
development of the ARISE bystander action model, a school violence ecological model
in which the student bystander is placed in the center. The ARISE model might be used
as an action strategy for postsecondary institutions with a multidisciplinary approach to
informing new policies and procedures.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to my parents, Craig and Denise Whitlow, for instilling a love of learning in my life. I appreciate your support and encouragement. To my Aunt, Karen Davis, thank you for your generosity, it was not unnoticed. Most importantly, thank you to my husband and children. Thank you, Derek, for unequivocally supporting this strenuous journey—and for being the person that you are. Without your support this would never have been possible. Thank you to my children, Davis and Mae. Perhaps someday you will want to read this. Please know that your first steps, first words, and constant smiles walked me through this educational passage.

Dr. Frank Tuitt, my advisor and mentor, thank you for your valuable feedback, challenging questions, and support as life happened along the way. My committee members, Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher, Dr. Linda Bowman, Dr. Martin Rhodes, and Dr. Cathy Lines, I thank you for your knowledge, guidance and time. Additionally, I would like to thank the students and faculty at Pima Medical Institute in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for allowing me into their lives, for their valuable time, and for sharing with me.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents, Alan and Kathleen Davis, who embraced each dream of mine with open arms. Grandpa, I wish that you were here to see this day. I am honored to share this accomplishment with my many family, friends, and colleagues. Thank you all for your patience, generosity, perspective, and support. When I began writing this dissertation, I also began running. It is true, we all hit the wall. Attempting to go around it will merely lead to failure in the end. Success lies in our ability to push through. Thank you to all of those who helped me discover the tenacity within to make it to the end.

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Forward

Martin Luther King, Jr. once commented that “he who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.” On April 2, 2012, a student opened fire among other students at Oikos University in California. During the memorial service, the translation of the school name, “Oikos” was noted as “how important life is” (2012, 2). Let us remember the innocent lives lost in a moment of dismay and let us seek answers to our actions. Let us not ask why evil exists, but instead ask how we may protest against it in our own educational environments.
Chapter One: Introduction

We are Virginia Tech.
The Hokie Nation embraces our own and reaches out with open hearts and hands to those who offer their hearts and minds. We are strong, and brave, and innocent, and unafraid. We are better than we think we are and not quite what we want to be. We are alive to the imaginations and the possibilities. We will continue to invent the future through our blood and tears and through all our sadness.

We are the Hokies.
We will prevail.
We will prevail.
We will prevail. (Giovanni, 2007)

Role of the Researcher

My research journey began with the fact that as a graduate student, I owe my own personal sense of safety to the euphoria that a higher education environment creates.

Each day I enter an environment in which I trust to social context, I unconsciously let my guard down and assume that this idyllic higher education campus includes a few good Samaritans. Yet I ask myself, “Would someone act to help me? Should I expect them to?”

A television documentary on the Columbine Massacre (April 20, 1999) included a reflection on the altruistic actions of several students and teachers during that gruesome incident. Detailed accounts such as the following were emphasized:

As Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris prowled the school with their guns and bombs, this is what the children did: a boy draped himself over his sister and her friend, so that he would be the one shot. A boy with 10 bullet wounds in his leg picked up an explosive that landed by him and hurled it away from the other wounded
kids. Others didn't want to leave their dying teacher when the SWAT team finally came: ‘Can't we carry him out on a folded-up table?’” Gibbs et al., 1999, p. 3)

Such actions are beyond heroic to me. As Sheleff (1978) stated, “the cry for help of a fellow being in distress serve[s] as the touchstone for expressing the obligations that one member of a society owes another by virtue of their shared humanity” (p. 1). Even more so, strangers have to make that decision quickly; bystanders face the dilemma of determining what they will define as good citizenship. I believe that school violence prevention programs and policies have limited an increase in potential action by failing to acknowledge the role of a bystander. Nuances of legal, moral, and social factors exist that may potentially weigh on a bystander during a violent incident. Bystanders may ask themselves questions such as: what are their rights and duties? What if they were to become injured? Should society encourage a response from bystanders?

I speculate on the effects on families of students who have been killed, whether through rampage school shootings, assaults, brutal rapes, homicides, burglaries, and so on. I cannot imagine living without my family, my husband and my children, just as those families who have lost someone during a school violence shooting incident had been challenged to do. I hope that someone would try to help my family members or me in a similar situation. A need for better established help-seeking strategies and support exists to respond to such incidents. Educators need to act now in order to possibly prevent what might occur later.

**Personal Dimensions**

Throughout this research, I was aware of my personal level of self-consciousness. I was the “curious student who [came] to learn from and with research participants” but I
also felt the experience (Glesne, 2011, p. 60). Peshkin (1988a, 1988b) applied his subjectivity as an autobiographical journey throughout his research. He reflected upon his research projects and the subjective lenses evoked from them in an effort to unearth his own subjective self. In the current research study, my personal subjectivities were likely to intersect differently within each phase of the research process (Patton, 2002).

“Position tends to refer to aspects of one’s person that are not necessarily embodied in the person and include both ascribed characteristics and achieved characteristics (Glesne, 2011, p. 157).” My identities and positions as (a) female, (b) white, (c) middle class, (d) a mother, (e) a doctoral student, (f) a military wife, (g) a gun-owner, (h) a teacher, and (i) a non-native Coloradan were more significant in some research phases than others.

To manage my identities throughout the research process, I reflected upon the shifts in my own subjective lenses and what influence these lenses had on my interaction with the research data. I recorded these reflections during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes, and I became aware of how my personal identities and history were engaged throughout the research (Glesne, 2011). I chose to include select journal reflections throughout the final dissertation to illustrate not only my experiences as a researcher, but also how my research had intersections with my identities. These personal reflections illustrate my relationship with the research.

Subjectivity

The quality of the current project was dependent on the rapport that came from a subjective knowledge of the topic of discussion (Glesne, 2011). Just as Elliot Eisner (1991) emphasized, truly defined benefits to subjectivity exist, as portrayed in the methodological approach of education connoisseurship. As a connoisseur, the researcher
is one who possesses insider knowledge and implements that subjective knowledge in an equitable effort. In the case of the current study, as the researcher, I shared the experience as a postsecondary student with my own preconceived notion of bystander action. My subjectivity provided me with a strong contextual understanding of my participants, hearing those perceptions that had particular value to me (Eisner, 1991).

Last, in an effort to reduce the common experience that I shared with the participants in the current study, I applied open-ended questions to minimize my potential subjective lens and hear their voices. As a researcher, I had to govern my efforts beyond my own individual and subjective self (Madison, 2005). A journal entry that I wrote following a pilot study interview was illustrative of the necessity to minimize my positions so that I could hear the participants’ voices:

During the first pilot study interview my gender identity became apparent to me as the participant stated “it is an engineering class, so it is probably a room full of men who can wrangle the shooter down.” I had an immediate emotional response to this statement, yet made no comment. Silently, I was considering the idea that engineering was a gender dominant major. Yet more importantly, I felt a loss of control as a female who believes that gender doesn’t restrict physical ability. Yet during our interview session the participant negated the idea that a female had the ability to be physically defensive. I must remind myself that I am not a women’s rights advocate during this research process. My role is not to quarrel with participants over a statement that creates an emotional response within me. Instead, I must accept the intersection of our differences and attempt to gain an understanding of the participant’s beliefs, which in turn impact their supposed actions. (Underhill, 2010)

**Research Questions**

In the current study, bystander action was examined through the following primary research question:

How do students interpret, presume, and characterize an appropriate bystander response during an incident of school violence?
To address this fundamental question, the following sub-questions were used to guide the research inquiry:

- What actions or inactions do students recommend?
- What factors (external and/or internal) influence their decision?

My intention was to generate new ideas for best practices in postsecondary school violence prevention efforts, but I also hoped to understand what provoked student bystanders to act in school violence shooting incidents or events. My aim was to provide a new model that may be applied to determine: (a) what role bystanders should play in preventing acts of school violence; (b) whether prescriptions for bystander action should vary depending on the incident; (c) how institutional leaders may describe best the context of a student bystander role; and (d) clear normative expectations of a bystander (Wilson-Simmons, Dash, Tehranifar, O’Donnell, & Stueve, 2006). Such a model is a framework that administrators may use to improve overall school violence prevention efforts in and among postsecondary institutions.

Since I entered postsecondary education in 1997, repeated episodes of school violence have occurred within the United States and stimulated concern for security practices and school safety measures (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). My interest in school violence began following the highly publicized school shooting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) on April 16, 2007. What began as an anomalous massacre later stimulated fear on college campuses across the United States. Concerns were renewed that not only should we as a society be fearful, but also that the safe haven of educational institutions had become dangerous places (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). As an instructor at a higher education institution in North Carolina at the time of
the Virginia Tech massacre, I found myself examining the safety of my surroundings one morning as I walked alone across a sun-drenched open campus. I began asking myself, “Has there truly been an upsurge in school violence? How can we become better prepared to act in a situation such as that which occurred at Virginia Tech?”

Cornell and Mayer (2010) stated, “school violence is not so much a new problem as a recurrent one that has not been adequately recognized for its persistence and pervasiveness throughout the history of education” (p. 7). The existing research had shown that school violence has been prevalent since the 1600s (Crews & Counts, 1997). Although school violence has persistently occurred throughout history, low-level incivility has not been the center of our media exposure — the violent episodes have been the focus of societal attention. The depth of existing literature about school violence is extensive. In a 2012 Google Scholar search of the term school violence, more than 64,300 articles showed as published within that current year. Perhaps the size of the existing school violence research might dampen another empirical effort within this growing body of literature; however, a more detailed examination of the literature has indicated that the variation in research agendas resulted in limited potential for a conceptual unification of one topic. The current research study was important because a framework for the development of a school violence ecological model was established in which the student bystander was placed in the center of the model. As noted by Astor, Guerra, and Van Acker (2010), “to date, researchers do not have a full epidemiological picture of school safety” (p. 69). I believe this incomplete picture is due to three primary factors.
The first factor is that a majority of the existing school violence research was focused on K-12 educational institutions and postsecondary institutions were not explored. Researchers should attend to studies at colleges and universities in an attempt to reduce potential risks that coincide with this type of environment. Postsecondary institutions are presumably safe environments (Pezza, 1995). After all, ivory towers of red brick and spacious greens are warm and serene symbols of a place where a world of possibility is nothing other than safe. Universities are places of learning, of individuality, of independence. If postsecondary institutions are to continue with their long-standing traditions of providing a democratic environment in which individuality, exploration, and life-long learning are promoted, then questions are appropriate as to whether such institutions’ leaders are maintaining the proper balance between “providing for the safety and security of our communities, while protecting privacy and liberty” (Leavitt, Spellings, & Gonzales, 2007, p. 1).

The second factor is that prevention efforts are released as one universal solution to school violence (e.g., Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1996 and 1990; Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act of 1986; and zero-tolerance policies). Since 1990 education has witnessed the development and execution of broadly implemented school safety policies and prevention programs such as those referenced above. Not until recently have existed “focused efforts to examine if there is research to support broadly implemented policies such as zero tolerance” (Astor et al., 2010, p. 71). Unfortunately, organizational leaders such as those of the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) have found little to no research support as to whether or not these policies are effective. These universal solutions seem to have originated from political and legal
entities in an effort to provide the public with a resolution to erroneous concerns fueled by isolated cases. Further, the United States Department of Education leaders have been quick to assume that school violence prevention efforts developed for K-12 educational environments cannot be generalized across P-20 institutions (Leavitt et al., 2007).

Just as no one school is the same, I believe that no one universal program will be effective in school violence prevention. Research efforts have been focused on understanding how aggression develops and creating a prevention program, instead of working toward the development of a comprehensive framework that considers the incident and the characters involved (Astor et al., 2010). I presuppose that by providing a hybridization of multiple sources (characters involved) that schools’ leaders effectively and independently could develop a prevention effort that best suits their unique environments.

The third factor as to why school violence research has been incomplete includes the fact that while a significant amount of empirical and theoretical research has been conducted involving school violence, a need remains for a better understanding of the characters, namely bystanders, involved in school violence situations. A large body of literature exploring bystander behavior already exists, built upon the initial framework of researchers Latane and Darley (1970). Later researchers questioned the utility of the laboratory simulated emergencies in the actual prediction of bystander intervention during violent incidents—arguing that mere personal characteristics or demographic variables are poor predictors of bystander action (Huston & Korte, 1976; Laner, Benin, & Ventrone, 2001). More recent research efforts have shown that “addressing individual and situational factors alone will not be sufficient to produce positive change” (Wilson-
Simmons et al., 2006, p. 58). Empirical evidence has shown support for the notion that characters in a school violence shooting incident choose an action due to the context itself (Astor et al., 2010).

Wilson-Simmons et al. (2006) conducted a qualitative research study to examine the role of student bystanders in middle schools. As previous researchers identified (e.g., Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998; O’Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999(b); Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994; Twemlow, Sacco, & Williams, 1996), the “bystanders typically influence violence by either passively accepting it or actively promoting it” (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006, p. 57). The field of education is lacking an understanding of school violence behaviors. Results of the current study could be used for innovations in light of the existing literature gaps and for providing an expanded school violence ecological model to inform better prevention efforts.

**Rationale for the Study: Why Study Bystanders?**

School violence has become almost commonplace in our society. The 2007 shooting at Virginia Tech “shocked the nation and brought violence on college campuses to the forefront of the nation’s attention” (Fallahi, Austad, Fallon, & Leishman, 2009, p. 120). Cho Seung-Hui, a student at Virginia Tech, killed a total of 32 students and faculty while wounding 25 others before taking his own life (Fallahi et al., 2009). School violence shooting incidents such as this one evoke intense emotional reactions, leaving individuals to not only question how and why they occur, but also why they could not have been prevented. Over the past several decades (1990-2012) a growing concern has arisen to understand the roots of violence and to find “constructive ways” to diminish it, and if possible, to prevent it (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007, p. 11).
Following the Virginia Tech tragedy, administrators and policymakers were propelled to become more aware of the dangers of an autonomous college campus. As stated within the correspondence (June 13, 2007) introducing the Report to the President on Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy (June 13, 2007), “states and local communities are carefully considering whether they have properly addressed and balanced the fundamental interests of privacy and individual freedom, [along with] safety and security” (Leavitt et al., 2007, p.1). The Virginia Tech tragedy was not alone on the list of higher education school violence shooting incidents, which indicates the immediate need for further efforts to define a violence prevention plan applicable to postsecondary institutions. In recent years, many high-profile incidents involving postsecondary school shootings have occurred within the United States among a 28 total incidents over the last two decades (See Table 1).

Table 1.
Postsecondary School Shooting Incidents: 1990-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Injuries/Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2, 2012</td>
<td>Oikos University</td>
<td>former student killed 7 students and wounded 3 others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 2011</td>
<td>Virginia Polytechnic Institute &amp; State University</td>
<td>person killed 1 campus police officer and then himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10, 2011</td>
<td>San Jose State University</td>
<td>student killed 2 and them himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 6, 2011</td>
<td>Southern Union State Community College</td>
<td>person killed 1 and then injured 3 others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3, 2010</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic Christian University</td>
<td>student killed 1 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 28, 2010</td>
<td>University of Texas-Austin</td>
<td>student terrorized campus into a lockdown, killing himself in the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 2010</td>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>employee killed 1 and them himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12, 2010</td>
<td>Alabama University</td>
<td>faculty member killed 3 faculty members, 3 others wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Incident Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18, 2009</td>
<td>Harvard University</td>
<td>person killed 1 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 2009</td>
<td>Wesleyan University</td>
<td>person killed 1 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10, 2009</td>
<td>Henry Ford Community</td>
<td>student killed 1 person and them himself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 1. *Postsecondary School Shooting Incidents: 1990-2012* (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Injuries/Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 27, 2008</td>
<td>University of Central Arkansas</td>
<td>student killed 2 students and wounded 1 other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 14, 2008</td>
<td>Northern Illinois University</td>
<td>6 dead (including gunman), 18 others wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 8, 2008</td>
<td>Louisiana Technical College</td>
<td>student killed 2 students and then himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 21, 2007</td>
<td>Delaware State University</td>
<td>student killed 1 student and wounded another one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16, 2007</td>
<td>Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University</td>
<td>student killed 32 people (students and faculty) including himself and wounded several more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2, 2007</td>
<td>University of Washington-Seattle</td>
<td>person killed 1 staff member and then himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2, 2006</td>
<td>Shepherd University</td>
<td>father killed 2 sons (students) and then himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9, 2003</td>
<td>Case Western Reserve University</td>
<td>alumnus killed 1 student and wounded 2 others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 28, 2002</td>
<td>University of Arizona Nursing College</td>
<td>student killed 3 faculty members and then himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 16, 2002</td>
<td>Appalachian School of Law</td>
<td>former student killed 3 faculty members, 1 student, and wounded 3 others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 17, 2001</td>
<td>Pacific Lutheran University</td>
<td>person kills 1 faculty member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 28, 2000</td>
<td>University of Arkansas at Fayetteville</td>
<td>student killed 2 students and wounded 1 other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 15, 1996</td>
<td>San Diego State University</td>
<td>student killed 3 faculty members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 17, 1996</td>
<td>Pennsylvania State University</td>
<td>student killed 1 student and wounded another student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 26, 1995</td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>former law student killed 2 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 1992</td>
<td>Simon's Rock College of Bard</td>
<td>student killed 1 faculty members, 1 student, and wounded 4 others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1, 1991</td>
<td>University of Iowa</td>
<td>former student killed 5 faculty members, 1 student, and then himself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table represents violent shooting incidents that occurred on college/university campuses (1990-2012) in which the incident resulted in death(s).
These attacks carried out by students have altered what was once a safe and reliable image of our educational system. Although violence has existed within all types of educational settings for centuries, with its causes entrenched in cultural, historical, social, and economic contexts of the current period, threats to schools and students are becoming more significant (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007). Consequently, postsecondary school violence research has increased in an effort to define and implement prevention strategies (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001).

In response to the increased number of school shootings, both professional and governmental organizations’ leaders (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, American College Health Association, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, etc.) have produced statistical reports and policy recommendations to reduce occurrences of school violence (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999). From a theoretical perspective, people who may play a role in school violence prevention have not been extensively researched. One example is the question of what influences a student bystander’s action during a school shooting incident. Educators must understand student perceptions of support, or lack of, regarding bystander action.

Best practice policies for school violence action plans cannot succeed without a clear understanding of how a student bystander may choose to act based on factors with influence on that choice. Most attempts at school violence prevention have been centered on the victim and/or perpetrator. Epstein comments that bystanders are “often unaware of their social influence on others” and “frequently have provided the pivotal social sanction that serves to promote or prevent violent provocation among others” (2002, p. 92). True, all members of an educational community could play a bystander role;
however, “because students are most likely to possess information earlier than others, and to be present when school violence occurs, their role in the school violence equation is of particular interest” (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006, p. 45).

Colleges and universities’ leader appear sincere in their effort to confront the antecedents of violence and alleviate school fears, but whether they have managed to support student bystander action is uncertain. The American College Health Association (ACHA) encourages campuses to become “actively engaged” in the battle to prevent violence among higher education communities and to “take action to eradicate injustice” (Carr, 2005, p. 1). Yet, what are the identified norms of who is responsible for taking action? Is there a consensus among higher education institutions regarding the attitudes and beliefs of student bystander action? Educational leaders are calling for the establishment of safe school climates by encouraging bystanders to act proactively and responsibility when faced with violence (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006).

The term bystander was applied previously to characterize a person who is present but does not participate in an event (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006). School violence bystanders are no longer spectators. They may be instigators and partakers (Coloroso, 2003). As indicated in secondary education bullying research, acts were different with respect to “motivation, intention, group involvement, degree of provocation, persistence over time, security, and culpability” (Rigby, 2007, p. 271). A student’s reason for a particular choice of action is influenced by numerous factors.

**Significance**

The current study is important for several reasons. First, this research addresses the call from the American Colleges Health Association (ACHA) to become engaged
more actively in school violence prevention efforts (Carr, 2005). Research has been conducted as a reaction to an incident, only questioning the causes. If educators were to explore the definitions of who can become more engaged, along with how, our educational communities can begin to serve more proactively. The current research was intended to close the gap in knowledge with a focus on postsecondary students who have become exposed to school shooting violence more than students encountered two decades ago. Second, while much research has been done identifying and analyzing a number of reasons as to why secondary student bystanders watch passively as an incident occurs (Rigby & Johnson, 2004), little research has been conducted to explore those potential reasons for postsecondary student choice of action during incidents of school violence. Even members of the U.S. Department of Education have recognized that what is plausible for K-12 education communities cannot be generalized among postsecondary environments or their students (Leavitt et al., 2007).

Third, the current study was used to examine the role of a bystander, which has been identified as more influential during a violent situation than often presumed (Staub, 2003). Historically, researchers have examined what causes perpetrators to carry out violent acts and what effect is shown on the victims while overlooking those individuals who may or may not intervene—the bystander. Last, while a foundation has been laid for understanding the evolution of violence, researchers need to better understand the characters involved in the actions of violence and those factors that potentially drive their behavior.

I believe, as Mantzavinos (2005) noted, that human action is related to outside factors (e.g., other persons, social environment, and other actions by the same person).
Whether easily recognized or not, every human action has meaning. To examine the premise of this meaning researchers must amass it from the first-person perspective, the individual themselves (Mantzavinos, 2005). This can be achieved by exploring the discord among motives, intentions, and reasons, each of which are a known variant of the “one-to-one” theory of human action (Mantzavinos, 2005, p. 88). In this particular research study, I learned the meaning behind a presumed action by obtaining the first-person voices of students. From there, I could foster an understanding about how a bystander has the potential to “create, change, or penetrate” existing violence prevention efforts on college campuses (Glesne, 2011, p. 39).

**Theoretical Framework: Social Systems Theory**

I hypothesized that bystander responses were due to a combination of both external and internal factors which have effect on an individual. I adapted the social system model of Bess and Dee (2008) for examining this hypothesis. The intention of the study was to illustrate that an understanding of the range of factors with influence on bystander action be used to aid in intervention efforts.

Systems theory is the interpretation of a social system and the relationship to its components as a hierarchical method for understanding social phenomena. This theory can be effective for understanding individual motivational factors that are both intentionally and unintentionally received. By definition, a system is “a set of components or elements that are interrelated, interactive, and interdependent” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 94; Hall & Fagen, 1980). Each component is interdependent; however, an innocuous change to one segment of the system could potentially generate unanticipated consequences somewhere else. The dynamics of a particular system could fluctuate at
any time due to an internal or external influence. As demonstrated within Figure 1 below, within the general systems theory is a smaller unit of analysis in which the individual is defined as a system—social systems theory (Bess & Dee, 2008).

![Figure 1. Social systems model (Bess & Dee, 2008)](image)

Social systems theory is framed around an individual and the systems in which he or she is involved. This theory “examines [both] the interaction of the external environment and the components of the individual’s internal subsystems to explain individual behavior” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 110). To understand an individual’s actions, the two juxtaposed systems surrounding the individual must be examined (Bess & Dee, 2008). Using the social system phenomena as a basis for theoretical presuppositions, Getzels, Lipham, and Campbell (1968) stated that “the social system [involves] two classes of phenomena which are at once conceptually independent and phenomenally interactive” (as cited in Morphet, Johns, & Reller, 1982, p. 69). By identifying the effect of both external and internal factors, to “understand, predict, and intervene in the ways a person behaves or is likely to behave” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 111) may be possible. In addition, by realizing the importance of the pair of parallel factors, nomothetic (external)
and idiographic (internal), we can better understand how the relationship between the factors interconnects the actions that construct the system.

**Blended Model: Adapted Social Systems Theory**

The main “system” in the adapted social systems theory is the individual. To understand individual behavior (such as student bystander action), educators must better examine the interplay between the two systems with which individuals are involved (Bess & Dee, 2008). By recognizing the relationship between individuals (students) as bounded systems and their environments (postsecondary institutions), educators may understand how student bystanders perceive their role in school violence prevention.

For the purposes of the current research, I have developed an adaptation to the social systems theory relative to both external and internal factors, yet more applicable to a review of school violence literature. I have applied the visual framework of the social systems theory to what I have established as the adapted social systems theory illustrated in Figure 2.

![Adapted social systems model](image)

*Figure 2. Adapted social systems model (Bess & Dee, 2008).*
The nomothetic dimension includes external forces found within the environment that may have effect on the individual. In the social systems model based on Getzels and Guba (1957), external forces involved a triad of interrelated parts (Bess & Dee, 2008). In the adapted social systems theory, the nomothetic dimension is a sequential method of external factors to suggest that each builds upon the other in the development of individual action. For example, societal events and influences result in communication (media), which in turn result in development and implementation of institutional policies and procedures.

The idiographic dimension includes the examination of factors within the individual: (a) personality, (b) beliefs, and (c) needs disposition (Bess & Dee, 2008). Individual personality is comprised of individual systems, which determine an understanding of the external environment. In the adapted social systems theory, the idiographic measure is a reference to more defined factors with influence on individual action. This also demonstrates that subjective experiences have the potential to fabricate a fear of crime, which then can result in the development of beliefs and values.

By adapting the social systems model, I have established two parallel tracks which may assist to “understand, predict, and intervene” in the ways a student bystander is likely to act during an incident of school violence (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 111). More specifically, with this adapted model, I assume that as a system, an individual adapts to facilitate a state of homeostasis between both the nomothetic and idiographic factors of influence on his or her actions. I believe that a student bystander will choose an action during a school violence shooting incident that is determined not only by what he or she
as an individual assumes he or she *would* do, but also by what he or she believes he or she *should* do, that is, what is expected of the individual.

While this model illustrates how counterbalanced parallel factors (inputs) can be used to perpetuate a particular human behavior such as student bystander action, the authors do not consider the effect that unbalanced factors have on that same potential human behavior. What action would student bystanders choose if what they would do and what they should do are not the same? The authors of this model assert that individuals will adapt to facilitate balance (Owens, 2004); how they choose to adapt and why they choose to adapt was of particular interest to me. I entered into the current research with the two goals: to examine both the nomothetic and idiographic factors of an individual system and to identify those factors of potential counterbalance to the system, which would have effects on individual action.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Overview

A respectable amount of literature relevant to the current research exists. In particular, some of the literature was background information, some was relevant to the scope of the phenomenon, and some was relevant centrally to the primary research question: How do students interpret, presume, and characterize an appropriate bystander response during an incident of school violence? This question intersects with more than one substantive area of literature (e.g., education, psychology, and sociology); therefore, I have organized the literature review by topic. I established two primary categorical reviews: (a) violence and (b) bystander effect, and the point of their intersection. The goal of the literature review was to identify how the current research question was related to the relevant literature. To complete this task, the necessity of school violence prevention programs and policies was explored first.

Using the Literature

School Violence Prevention: Urgency or Ballyhoo?

A multitude of factors must be considered when creating safer learning environments. One plan will not succeed across all P-20 educational institutions, as no two schools are alike exactly. Researchers have identified that “violence prevention programs work best when they incorporate multiple strategies and address the full range of possible acts of violence in schools” (International Association of Chiefs of Police
To work effectively, prevention policies must be established and implemented with not only the insight of administrators, but also with the insight of students within the community.

For the purpose of the current research, I defined a community as an educational setting composed of a postsecondary institution (McCabe & Martin, 2005). Professional and governmental organizations’ leaders (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, American College Health Association [ACHA], U.S. Department of Homeland Security) have indicated that school violence prevention policies, when a collaborative effort, have the potential of benefits beyond reduced hazards associated with school shootings. Other potential benefits that school violence prevention policies offer include (International Association of Chiefs of Police, n.d.):

- Decreased rates of violence and antisocial behavior;
- Improved campus climate;
- Increased community awareness and preparation for potential human-made and natural disasters.

Prevention efforts should have guidelines in the following areas (International Association of Chiefs of Police, n.d.):

- ways to prevent [school] violence;
- threat assessments;
- planning and training for a violent incident;
- how to respond during a violent incident;
- how to manage the aftermath of a violent incident;
• legal considerations [for all involved]; and
• recommendations for the media.

In thinking about school violence policies among postsecondary institutions, the ACHA encouraged campus leaders to become “actively engaged” in the battle to prevent violence, and to “take action to eradicate injustice” (Carr, 2005, p. 1). What I discovered was that the research was built upon what researchers already knew; prevention efforts should be collaborative. A community can achieve this by including the bystander in strategic prevention development. To be successful in doing so, educational researchers must explore how violence has transformed over the years so that educators can understand our vulnerability and define the appropriate reaction. By raising the level of abstraction to a review of the etiology of violence, I could illustrate the connections between the current research endeavor and the existing literature (Punch, 2006).

**A Progression of Violence**

No single clear definition of violence exists but various definitions exist with connotations from obvious to subtle. The current literature was more inclusive in the definition. As noted within Table 2, a multiplicity of definitions existed, which were from a range of perspectives according to the cultures, communities, and individuals involved. For the current research, I chose to focus on those definitions that are physical acts of violence; therefore, violence was defined as a physical act in which one or more people caused harm and suffering to others.
Table 2.

*Definitions of Violence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Author(s)/Publication Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Included under the label of violence are the crimes of murder, rape,</td>
<td>McCabe &amp; Martin (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assault, and robbery.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An exertion of physical force to as to injure or abuse.</td>
<td>Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a unitary concept, but in the form of multiple typologies with the</td>
<td>Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, &amp; Bollinger (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following variations: (a) relationship-based, (b) bullying, (c) assassin,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) suicidal avenger, (e) entrepreneurial, (f) street/predatory, (g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terrorist, (h) suicide by cop, (i) group-induced, and (j) road rage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive behavior where the actor or perpetrator uses his or her own</td>
<td>Olweus (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body or an object (including a weapon) to inflict (relatively serious)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injury or discomfort upon another individual.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors by individuals that intentionally threaten, attempt, or inflict</td>
<td>Reiss &amp; Roth (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical harm on others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sudden and extremely forceful act that causes physical harm or</td>
<td>Rich (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suffering to persons or animals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior that by intent, action, and/or outcome harms another person.</td>
<td>Roark (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of a fairly classic delinquency or criminality, and an</td>
<td>Wieviorka (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expression of a feeling of social injustice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual,</td>
<td>World Health Organization (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some critics disagree with the need to label school violence as an epidemic (Best, 2002). According to Best (2002), members of society are seeking solutions to violence that only appears to be out of control. He stated that historical tragic events (e.g., Oklahoma bombing [1995]; Olympic Park bombing [1996]; Columbine massacre [1999]; terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center [2001]), have masked the overall statistical
trend that violent incidents have actually declined in recent years (Best, 2002). Although the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has reported a 5.5% decrease in the number of violent crimes over the past year, since 1990, 21 postsecondary school shooting incidents occurred (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2010). Regardless whether societal violence merely is “hype”, documented incidents still occur among our schools today and to which attention must be given (Best, 2002, p. 51). Is violence prevalent enough among educational communities that educators need to work toward the development of prevention efforts that may lead to amelioration on our campuses?

**The Evolution of School Violence**

Historically school violence has “cited acts [that] date back to the 1970s” (Booren & Handy, 2009, p. 233). In 1995, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation issued a report indicating that schools could be an environment either (a) to aid in the prevention of violence or (b) to reinforce violent attitudes (as cited in Cowie & Jennifer, 2007). Historically, the U.S. educational has fallen into the latter of the two options. As shown in Table 3, the educational system has historically deprived students of instructional methods that teach how to encourage non-violent attitudes.
Table 3.

*History of School Disturbances and Violence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Period</th>
<th>Notable Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Period (1600-1780)</td>
<td>The early period was known for its extremely harsh treatment of youth in and out of the school setting. The most common disciplinary technique was corporal punishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early National Period (1780-1830)</td>
<td>School disturbances were a reaction to conditions and teaching methods more than anything else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common School Era (1830-1860)</td>
<td>Expectations of proper student behavior continued to be extreme and the punishment very physical, causing many schools to become dangerously unruly places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive School Era (1860-1960)</td>
<td>Students were taught to curb their impulses to talk to their friends and disrupt the learning process. During this time, teachers began to find success in the use of structure in the classroom to control a potentially negative student behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaleidoscopic Era (1960- Present)</td>
<td>&quot;School violence&quot; was coined during this era as school disturbance evolved from a minor problem to one that caused the US school system to be branded as failure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from “The Evolution of School Disturbance in America: Colonial times to modern day” by Crews & Counts, 1997.

The evolution of pro-social behavior from the Colonial Period to the Kaleidoscopic Era paved a course for education, which may have established the violence which faces our educational system today. Albert Einstein stated: “The worst thing seems to be for schools to work with methods of fear, force, and artificial authority. Such treatment destroys the healthy feelings, the integrity, and the self-confidence of pupils” (as cited in Crews & Counts, 1997, p. 17).

Researchers have attested that school violence has been associated with aggression and bullying. However, of more concern is that in recent years an increasing number of violent incidents have become fatal (Booren & Handy, 2009). These incidents, initiated by students such as Seung-Hui Cho, Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, and Kip Kinkel, increase the awareness of school violence today. People recall examples.
“We have brains that use the Example Rule to conclude that being able to easily recall examples of something happening proves that it is likely to happen again” (Gardner, 2008, p. 56). Violence ebbs and flows with society and as it perpetrates into our daily lives, it spreads into our schools. School violence prevention efforts have received increased attention among our local communities, states, and even nationally, as they have implications for action and research (Booren & Handy, 2009). After the Virginia Tech tragedy, the U.S. Department of Education leaders became aware that although they had established plausible emergency management guidelines for K-12 institutions, colleges and universities had been overlooked in the assumption that guidelines could be generalized. Postsecondary institutions, however, have unique challenges such as campus autonomy, physical space, age of students, and the size of the student body (Leavitt et al., 2007). In the Report to the President on Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy, participants noted that violence prevention plans designed for K-12 institutions were unlikely to be applied to “more porous, larger, and diverse college campuses or settings” (Leavitt et al., 2007, p. 16). Appropriate violence prevention at colleges and universities, where the population includes adults and young adults, needed to be explored.

While I had hoped to discover more notable empirical examinations of prevention efforts among postsecondary institutions, limited research existed. In contrast, vast research exploring existing K-12 school safety efforts existed. Mayer and Furlong (2010) identified the array of measurement strategies used to explore school violence prevention efforts, including what should be done to synthesize what they referred to as fragmented research. The literature indicated that while a comprehensive pool of research on school
violence existed, a majority of the outcomes were too broad and thereby limited in their relevancy to postsecondary institutions. Additionally, researchers have begun to denote the need for a more “participatory process and bottom-up approach that promises to secure great stakeholder investment and greater collaboration” (Cornell & Mayer, 2010, p. 12). This awareness is useful because this research study offers the opportunity to extend this concept into a collective focus involving all individuals involved in a school violence shooting incident.

**Characters of a Violent Incident**

The best attempt at reducing school violence is to prevent it if possible. “The interest in predicting violence stems from a desire to prevent it rather than attempt to control or limit it after it occurs” (Rich, 1992, p. 35). Roark (1993) argued that violence must be defined clearly before making a “move beyond vagueness to clarity that favors efforts at prevention and control” (as cited in Nicoletti et al., 2001, p. 23). From a theoretical perspective, understanding is necessary about the characters who are involved in perpetrating or involved in responding to acts of violence to effectively prevent it. Those individuals include the victims, protectors, perpetrators, and bystanders.

Researchers have used vocabulary differently within the victimization research depending on the literature, professional field of study, and school of thought. As shown in Table 4, this provides significant variation among the defined roles of victims, protectors, perpetrators, and bystanders. Literature on violent characters showed that examinations existed of both victims and perpetrators during a violent incident, but limited empirical examinations existed of bystanders.
Table 4.

Characters in a Violent Incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Author(s)/Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bystanders</td>
<td>A separate group of individuals, different than aggressors and victims.</td>
<td>Weins and Dempsey (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Victim</td>
<td>Individuals who have experienced the violence directly.</td>
<td>Nicoletti et al. (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protectors</td>
<td>Those individuals who attempt to prevent a violent incident from occurring and/or intervene during a violent incident.</td>
<td>Nicoletti et al. (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Victim</td>
<td>Individuals who are involved (e.g., family members, witnesses, rescue personnel), but not directly impacted by the violence. Also referred to as indirect victim, vicarious victim, and emotional contagion.</td>
<td>Nicoletti et al. (2001); Ruback &amp; Thompson (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Victim</td>
<td>Those individuals who aide in the aftermath who also become affected by the violent event.</td>
<td>Nicoletti et al. (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of Choice</td>
<td>Selected by the perpetrator for the reason that they possess the necessary qualities to carry out their violent behavior.</td>
<td>Nicoletti, et al. (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of Opportunity</td>
<td>In the wrong place at the wrong time; also an individual who attempts to intervene unsuccessfully.</td>
<td>Nicoletti et al. (2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Epstein (2002) emphasized, postsecondary school violence often occurred in “quasi-public locations on campus” thereby frequently involving a third-party or bystander (p. 92). Educational communities’ leaders have begun to call upon researchers and practitioners for collaboration in an effort to identify “norms, attitudes, and outcome expectancies” that frame bystander behavior to establish prevention strategies (Stueve et al., 2006, p. 117). Growing interest in bystander action has been derived from research showing that “bystanders (whether groups or individuals) can limit, stop, and even
prevent violence, and encourage helpful actions by their words, actions, and example” (Staub, 2003, pp. 4-5).

Herein resides the intersection of the fields of education and psychology—allowing this research study to extend the trends within both bodies of literature and place them into context. The paradigm for my research was using psychology to implement educational policy (Bogden & Biklen, 1992). I obtained a collection of logically related concepts (e.g., prevention efforts, school violence, and collaboration) and then sought literature on related assumptions to explore present knowledge about bystander action.

**The Bystander Effect**

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2012) a bystander is “an individual who is present but does not take part in an event or situation” (as cited in Stueve et al., 2006, p. 118). In the past, the words *innocent* and *bystander* were “inextricably linked” (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006, p. 45). A restrictive definition of the bystander is no longer applicable and has since been expanded within both the school violence and the bullying literature. Researchers have recognized that a bystander can play the role not only of an onlooker, but also of one who prevents or potentially promotes the onset of victimization (Stueve et al., 2006; Weins & Dempsey, 2009). A considerable amount of research has shown that bystanders could be defined as a separate group of individuals, different than aggressors or victims (Weins & Dempsey, 2009). Multiple variations of bystander roles in violent situations have been identified in research on bullying, as outlined in Table 5. Bullying research also had a strong foundation for defined bystander roles and the potential factors weighing on them.
### Table 5.

**Bystander Roles in the Literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Author(s)/ Publication Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active</strong></td>
<td>Foster violence when they prevent others from intervening in an altercation, encouraging aggressive behavior.</td>
<td>Salmivalli (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant</strong></td>
<td>Join in on the violent behavior; aids in the violent act.</td>
<td>O'Connell, Pepler &amp; Craig (1999); Nickerson, Mele &amp; Princiotta (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bystander</strong></td>
<td>Individuals who are neither perpetrators nor victims.</td>
<td>Staub (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complicit</strong></td>
<td>Associated with a violent act.</td>
<td>Coloroso (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defender</strong></td>
<td>Intervene on behalf of the targeted victim.</td>
<td>O'Connell, Pepler &amp; Craig (1999); Wiens &amp; Dempsey (2009); Nickerson, Mele &amp; Princiotta (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disengaged</strong></td>
<td>Watch what happens and take no action as it is &quot;none of [their] business.&quot;</td>
<td>Olweus (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Onlooker</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourager</strong></td>
<td>Promotes the violent act.</td>
<td>Wiens &amp; Dempsey (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td>Outside individuals, groups, and nations.</td>
<td>Staub (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follower</strong></td>
<td>Either assist or reinforce the [offender].</td>
<td>Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, &amp; Franzoni (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Henchman</strong></td>
<td>Take an active part, but do not initiate the [violent act].</td>
<td>Olweus (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ignorer</strong></td>
<td>Disregards the violent act in its entirety.</td>
<td>Wiens &amp; Dempsey (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td>Members of a perpetrator group who themselves are not perpetrators.</td>
<td>Staub (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outsider</strong></td>
<td>Passively watch the incident occur; unconnected and/or unacquainted with those engaged in the violent act.</td>
<td>O'Connell, Pepler &amp; Craig (1999); Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, &amp; Franzoni (2008); Nickerson Mele, &amp; Princiotta (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive</strong></td>
<td>Does nothing to actively instigate or encourage violence, yet do nothing to prevent it from escalating; like the violent act but choose not to display open support.</td>
<td>O'Connell, Pepler &amp; Craig (1999); Olweus (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possible Defender</strong></td>
<td>Dislike the [violent act] and think that they should assist yet choose not to.</td>
<td>Olweus (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reinforcer</strong></td>
<td>Supports, encourages, and perhaps even augments the violent act.</td>
<td>Wiens &amp; Dempsey (2009); Nickerson, Mele &amp; Princiotta (2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To explore how individuals within a particular community respond as bystanders, the broader literature on third-party intervention was reviewed. A significant amount of the literature has been examinations of bystander action in differing emergency situations. Such situations were limited to instances of smoke entering a facility, medical emergencies, and workplace accidents (Levine & Crowther, 2008; Sheleff, 1978). The majority of this social facilitation research (Clark & Word, 1972; Darley, Teger, & Lewis, 1973; Latane, 1970; Latane & Darley, 1970; Latane & Rodin, 1969) indicated that the presence of other bystanders, location of emergency (urban or rural), knowing the victim and/or perpetrator, perception of the situation, personality, socioeconomic status, and motivation were activators for a bystander’s action. Bystander research has demonstrated numerous theoretical accounts of findings of which the most notable two findings were diffusion of responsibility and group cohesiveness.

**Diffusion of responsibility.** Latane & Darley (1970) argued that social influence was a critical determinant of bystander intervention, even though a bystander may be unaware as to the influence. Directly applied to a violent situation, these researchers argued that with the presence of another individual, a bystander encountered a diffusion of the onus of responsibility and potential blame. Schwartz and Gottlieb (1980) discovered that “anonymous bystanders who were alone indicated more frequently than those who were in the presence of another that they sensed it was their responsibility to act” (p. 423). People were less likely to help in the presence of others because their own internal cues reflected unaccountability and suggested that helping was not required of them (Garcia, Weaver, Moskowitz, & Darley, 2002). Group size inversely was related to
bystander action, as shown in numerous studies (Feld, S (1977); Laner, Benin & Ventrone, 2001; Latane & Darley, 1970).

In contrast, some studies showed that the bystander effect was less pronounced due to alternative factors such as (a) group cohesiveness, (b) anonymity, and (c) the social responsibility norm (Levine & Crowther, 2008). The data of Piliavin, Rodin, and Piliavin (1969) was not supportive of the diffusion of responsibility method. Bystander group actions involving the diffusion effect might operate differently relative to group size (Morgan, 1978). Additionally, anonymity vis-à-vis another witness had notable influence on bystander action as well (Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1980). Knowing that another was aware that they had witnessed a violent act made them feel that they were more expected to take an active role. Evidence directly indicated that the effect of anonymity on other bystanders significantly increased bystander action (Bickman, 1971; Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1976; Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1980).

**Group cohesiveness.** Nearly all bystander effect research had involved participants who were strangers at the time of the emergency, thereby establishing low group cohesiveness (Latane & Nida, 1981). Rutkowski, Gruder, and Romer (1983) demonstrated that cohesiveness cancelled the diffusion effect in a group of bystanders, defined as “the degree of attraction group members have for one another” (p. 545). This experimental data supports the lack of action taken in the March 13, 1964 Kitty Genovese murder when neighbors did not take any action to intervene in her assault (Rosenthal, 1964). Limited cohesiveness among bystanders produces little social pressure to intervene. In the past, researchers have narrowed the scope of their studies of bystander intervention phenomenon and have focused directly on the presence of others. This
traditional model “ignores the social meaning which attends not only to the way events might be perceived but also to the decision to intervene” (Levine, 1999, p. 1152).

Other theoretical perspectives have been applied to bystander action as well. These approaches included “learning theory, equity theory, attribution theory, cognitive development theory, sociobiological perspective” and reinforcement theory (Laner et al., 2001, pp. 24-25). While the literature has extensively explored those factors which influence bystander action in a variety of emergency situations quantitatively, scant data existed on the unstructured information (e.g., personal beliefs, attitudes, experiences) that might have insight into human behavior and the decision making process. Researchers have recognized that the bystander effect was one of the most well-established and replicated discoveries within social psychology (Latane & Nida, 1981); however, the research has failed to be a significant contribution to the development of practical strategies for increasing bystander action (Levine, Cassidy, & Brazier, 2002). The overall wave of pessimism regarding the utility of bystander theory has created a decrease in research in the area.

Perhaps the utility of the theory is related to the method of study. Although earlier research was an opportunity to hypothesize what factors might have influence on a student bystander during school violence shooting incidents (e.g., group cohesiveness, anonymity, location of the emergency, relationship to the victim), the preferred methodological approach has been quantitative. Previous researchers of factors in school violence bystander action (Booren & Handy, 2009; Nickerson & Princiotta, 2007; Roberts, Wilcox, May, & Clayton, 2007; Weins & Dempsey, 2009) had employed student self-report survey methodologies, seeking a generalizable trend. The current
study sought to understand the meaning of the action in a qualitative approach. Past research efforts were an introduction to the objective factors with influence on bystander action; the current study was designed to build on the alternative factors introduced within the literature, those which were more subjective in nature.

**An Examination of Alternative Factors**

Huston and Korte (1976) challenged the work of Latane and Darley (1968) stating that bystander responses might be more complex than initially defined in the bystander effect (Laner et al., 2001). The diffusion of responsibility hypothesis included that the emergency situation itself had overriding values, norms, and dispositions. Researchers had failed to consider the social, moral, and philosophical issues with influence on a bystander. This limited any potential theorization about the role of alternative factors which guide both the interpretation of events, but also decisions about the legitimacy of action.

Some researchers (Huston & Korte, 1976; Geis, Huston, & Wright, 1976; Schwartz, 1977) argued that most norms examined in the past were too vague and personal characteristics were poor predictors of bystander action (Laner et al., 2001). These studies were limited to biological factors and dispositions. Several factors bade a bystander to be cautious in their response: (a) legal position, (b) personal consequences, and (c) social and ethical implications (Sheleff, 1978). The research from the Kitty Genovese case showed that bystander action had been segmented into three distinct categories: (a) behavioral, (b) legal, and (c) social (Sheleff, 1978). To examine bystander action in a school violence situation, I have reviewed the literature on potential alternative factors and their fit among these Sheleff’s (1978) three primary categories.
Behavioral Factors

The behavioral category includes those factors such as (a) the bystanders’ perceptions of the crisis situation, (b) the dilemmas that the bystanders confront, (c) the debate with influences on the bystanders’ responses, and (d) the impetus for action or inaction (Sheleff, 1978). Numerous explorations of fear of crime and victimization have been conducted: “What makes fear such an important area of investigation is [the] profound impact not only on the quality of the daily lives of individuals but also on the economics and politics of entire societies” (Chadee, Virgil, & Ditton, 2009, p. 174). Many behaviors have been related to fear. The exploration of the relationship between fear and bystander action was worthwhile for the potential to indicate the depth of motivations, reactions, and behavior of a bystander’s action or inaction.

Fear. Franklin Delano Roosevelt boldly stated, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance” (as cited in Gardner, 2008, pp. 5-6). Unreasonable and unjustified fear might be escalated into a full-bore panic that “cause us to make increasingly foolish decisions in dealing with the risks we face every day” (Gardner, 2008, p. 6). Fear is intangible and cannot be assessed by its object such as an animal or highway, or measured as in cases of homicide rates within a particular jurisdiction. Fear is “a diffuse psychological construct affected by a number of aspects of [social] life” (Skogan, 1976, p. 14). Successful quantification of fear is difficult because the concept is amorphous; fear is subjective. Today, social science researchers identify them as feeling and reason (Gardner, 2008). In examining school violence, researchers must explore feeling (Booren & Handy, 2009). How fear impacts a bystander’s action is even more
subjective because it is the individual experience or set of experiences at that particular moment that determine the action and therefore, extremely speculative (Lee, 2009).

Feeling is the source of the snap judgments that humans experience as a hunch or an intuition or as emotions like unease, worry, or fear. A decision that comes from feeling might be difficult or even impossible to explain in words. You don’t know why you feel the way you do, you just do (Gardner, 2008, p. 16).

People build fear based upon the perception of the probability of being victimized (Ferraro, 1995); therefore, in considering the action that a bystander might take in a violent situation, researchers have had to examine the etiology of fear itself. Fear is not perceived risk (Ferraro, 1995). Risk is a cognitive assessment of a particular situation. A bystander will assess their personal judgments and values in an effort to weigh the risks involved in his or her choice of action. For example, a bystander might assess the degree of personal risk (to self) and consider social or personal expectations. If the individual can obtain examples of other violent instances, then he or she likely will determine that the risk is high (Ferraro, 1995). The assumption that if an example can be recalled then that occurrence is common is referred to as the “availability heuristic” (Gardner, 2008, p. 16). Research has shown that an individual cannot assess personal risk without factoring in fear (Ferraro, 1995). Fear is affective; thus, despite the level of risk involved, an individual may become empowered to take action, or may become completely dysfunctional when presented with a possibility of danger.

Interpretation of fear occurs within a situational context (Ferraro, 1995). The behavioral reaction to fear might be studied in connection with the entire context (Thomas & Thomas, 1928). Measures of action within an objective situation are difficult. Historically, fear studies have not illustrated “pure reflections of emotional
responses”, but instead represent imagined fear (Ferraro, 1995, p. 25). As measured in a subjective context, individuals were presumed to respond with an emotional reaction and not with an estimate of perceived risk. This leads to the point that fear and risk are not interchangeable terms. Examinations of the subject of fear should also give explicit attention to the risk interpretation process (Ferraro, 1995). Risk evidently plays a substantial role in understanding fear and its behavioral implications.

**Legal Factors**

The legal category includes those factors in consideration of the legal position of bystanders: (a) their obligation to act, (b) the legal protection provided to them, (c) the role of the law in their action or inaction, and (d) any potential sanctions or rewards (Sheleff, 1978). Researchers have an inadequate understanding of how an environment supports bystander action. School shooting incidents have prompted efforts to establish environments that encourage bystanders to become an active participant in violence prevention” (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). Historically, common law included that no one is required to help a stranger in peril or distress but if a bystander chooses to render aid, “the very act of charity puts a noose around the neck of the kind-hearted person” (Gregory, 1966, p. 29). Bystanders identified the fundamental reasons for their reluctance to help someone in distress was the desire not to get involved and the desire to mind their own business (Gregory, 1966). However, mixed messages and ambiguous policies detailing how a student bystander should act also should be considered as a reason for reluctance as well (Stueve et al., 2009).

*Policies and regulations.* Bystanders have the potential either to exacerbate or to pacify a violent situation. Although the circumstances in which school violence occurred
on a particular campus were varied, the research indicated that bystanders were present in most cases, thus making their role in the “school violence equation” of “particular interest” (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006, p. 45). College and university communities appear sincere in their effort to confront the antecedents of violence and alleviate school fears, yet it is not clear if leaders manage to support student bystander action (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006). The American College of Health Association (ACHA) has encouraged campuses to become “actively engaged” in the battle to prevent violence among higher education communities and to “take action to eradicate injustice” (Carr, 2005, p. 1). Educational community leaders have called for the establishment of safe school climates by encouraging bystanders to act proactively and responsibly when faced with violence (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006). Yet, the rights and duties of a student bystander have not been identified in any higher education institution. Postsecondary institutions’ leaders have yet to resolve their ambivalence between “their desire to support and encourage the virtues of helpful and altruistic behavior and their reluctance to be bound by all the consequences of such behavior” (Sheleff, 1978, p. 123).

Researchers know very little about how policies affect student bystander action. Even more evident has been the lack of bystander-specific resources and policies among postsecondary institutions. Without clear policies and procedures, researchers should not be perplexed if we were to learn that a bystander failed to act on a threat of violence or during a violent incident (Stueve et al., 2006). Researchers have learned of instances in which student bystanders, mostly those within bullying situations, failed to act (Coloroso, 2003). Data had shown that bystanders more likely were willing to act when they “know
what to do and feel that they possess the necessary resources” (Stueve et al., 2006, p. 121).

A significant amount of exploration has been conducted regarding the effectiveness of the zero-tolerance policy within K-12 educational communities among the bullying and the school violence literature (Booren & Handy, 2009; Bucher & Manning, 2003; Coloroso, 2003; and Fox & Harding, 2005). This “controversial [K-12] violence prevention model” has led some researchers to suggest that school communities merely build upon the policies instead of directly relying upon them (Booren & Handy, 2009, p. 236). The zero-tolerance policy model indicates that to prevent violence, educational community members must follow rules without exception. As noted by Fox and Harding (2005, as cited in Booren & Handy, 2009, “this type of intervention and prevention will create a culture in schools . . . which can have unexpected and hurtful outcomes” (p. 236).

While researchers continue to develop models to apply to formal violence intervention programs (e.g., the Family and Community Violence Program [FCVP], Second Step, and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program), a gap remained in the literature on addressing students’ perceptions of such efforts (Booren & Handy, 2009). The importance of exploring how such policies impact student action is accentuated. How safe students believe they are “can be important for understanding how to best create safe school environments” (Booren & Handy, 2009, p. 238). Although school violence prevention programs have been evaluated, the measurement outcomes merely were used to identify whether or not the models were successful in reducing violent
incidents. By integrating student perceptions in the development of prevention programs, students become stakeholders in prevention efforts and become more likely to act.

**Social Factors**

The social category includes those factors involving the demands a society makes upon members for altruistic behavior; the importance of altruism in social life; and how a community might be responsible for fostering altruistic and prosocial behavior (Sheleff, 1978). Perhaps the social climate in which we live establishes a foundation of character traits which impact our social, moral, and philosophical views. “Few social interactions so illuminate the nature of the social bond within a society as the manner in which an innocent bystander responds to the plight of a stranger in need of assistance” (Sheleff, 1978, p. 1).

What impacts an individual when their social equilibrium is challenged by a violent incident? How does our societal portrayal of our most “cherished values” impact bystander action (Sheleff, 1978, p. 1)?

**Media.** In our present society, a voluminous amount of information is acquired through the media. Americans turn to newspapers, the Internet, radios, and television to obtain the weather, world events, and local issues.

On the subject of school violence, which for many individuals is equated to Columbine, the effect of media coverage for this one particular event cannot be ignored. The school shooting at Columbine in 1999 gave politicians and the media workers an event that they had sought to spotlight cruelty and evil in the world (McCabe & Martin, 2005, p. 8).

Although violence is not a modern phenomenon, periodic high-profile events such as school shootings have been used to transform it into an omnipresent idea in our society (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). Violent deaths, branded as “school shootings” by the media,
are rare, although they secure a large amount of media attention (Verlinden, Hersen, & Thomas, 2000, p. 3). Television news reports, newspapers, and the radio have been saturated with public information during times of crisis such as the Columbine school shooting, the Virginia Tech tragedy, and the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). Just as Croteau and Hoynes (2003) suggested, media constantly has been present in our lives and the “information on the subject of school violence is no different” (McCabe & Martin, 2005, p. 6). Research has proven that media sensationalism of school violence has the potential to impact human behavior (Feldman & Seigelman, 1985).

Empirical data have been used to emphasize that individuals were more likely to believe that violence has become more problematic; their fears were fabricated from media reports of extreme violence (Williams & Corvo, 2005). Literature support existed for the idea that media significantly had effects on an individual’s negotiation of meaning (Finley, 2003). Individuals used information obtained from the media to formulate their own image of the world (Burns & Crawford, 1999; Surette, 1992). This “social construction of reality” became the frame for people’s identities and socialization (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 7; Kraus & Davis, 1976). Personal experiences coupled with a derived sense of safety were the foundation to an individual’s social construct (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003).

Interpretation is not an autonomous act, nor is it determined by any particular force, human or otherwise. Individuals interpret with the help of others — people from the past, writers, family, television personalities, and persons they meet in settings in which they work and play—but others do not interpret for them. Through interaction, the individual constructs meaning (Williams & Corvo, 2005, p. 51; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 36).
According to Ellenius and Foundation (as cited in Altheide, 2009), “propaganda research shows that decision-makers, who serve as key news sources, can shape perceptions of mass audiences and promote acquiescence to state control measures” (p. 44). However, this only reinstates what we already know from decades of research: the psychological effects of media have become commonplace in that only academia continues to question the impact (Giles, 2003). A student bystander might have formulated an intention to act in a school violence shooting incident based on what he or she had learned from the media (Altheide, 2009).

**Current Policies Established In an Effort to Achieve Rational Outcomes**

**The Clery Act**

Within higher education one simple action can lead to a movement, “change begins with one student, one community” (OneStudent, 2010, p. 1). In 1986, Jeanne Clery was that one student for higher education. Jeanne was a 19 year-old freshman at Leigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, when she was brutally raped and murdered in her own dormitory room on April 5, 1986. Upon investigation, Jeanne’s parents later learned that a series of more than 38 violent crimes had occurred on the Leigh University campus in the three years before her murder. These statistics were not reported to students, parents, or the public for that matter. Only 4% of colleges and universities in the United States had reported crime statistics with the FBI in the year of Jeanne Clery’s murder (Clery Center for Security on Campus, Inc., 2012). This information led the Clery family, along with other postsecondary campus crime victims, to reform the culture of security on postsecondary institution campuses throughout the United States. In 1987, Howard and Connie Clery founded the first national not-for-profit organization dedicated
to the prevention of criminal violence (Clery Center for Security on Campus, Inc., 2012). The tenet of the organization was established in that “crime awareness can prevent campus victimization” (Clery Center for Security on Campus, Inc., 2012).

The Clerys lobbied to reconstruct the way that postsecondary campus crime was reported and won their case. In 1988, Pennsylvania became the first state to enact a law requiring state colleges and universities to report crime statistics on an annual basis. In 1990, the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 was enacted by Congress and signed into law by President George Bush (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2012, p. 1). Amendments were made to the act in 1998 when it was renamed in honor of Jeanne Clery, becoming the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (known as the “Clery Act”). The landmark law of the Clery Act is part of the Higher Education Act in which postsecondary institutions have requirements to disclose information about campus crime and security policies on an annual basis. Any institution, whether public or private, participating in federal student aid programs is subject to regulation which is enforced by the U.S. Department of Education (Higher Education Center, n.d.). Most postsecondary institutions in the United States are required to comply with the annual reporting requirements.

The Higher Education Act

President Lyndon Johnson signed the Higher Education Act (HEA) into law on November 8, 1965 as part of his societal domestic agenda. In Title IV of the Act, the purpose is listed as being “to assist in making available the benefits of postsecondary education to eligible students in institutions of higher education by:”

- providing federal Pell grants;
• supplying educational opportunity grants for those of financial needs;
• providing payments to states for financial aid;
• providing special programs and projects that identify and encourage students of financial or cultural need to obtain postsecondary education, prepare low income populations for postsecondary education, and give remedial assistance; and
• providing assistance to higher education institutions.

The Higher Education Act has been rewritten nine times since its enactment in 1965, with the most recent update occurring in 2008 (Higher Education Center, n.d.). The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) was enacted on August 14, 2008.

Summary

To inform postsecondary school violence prevention efforts, the study of the intersection of violence and bystander action is imperative in the development of effective prevention efforts. A review of the literature showed that even though a significant amount of literature exists surrounding the bystander effect, a vital limitation of the traditional research has been the limited focus on objective measures at “the expense of other socially meaningful dimensions” (Cherry, 1995; Levine & Crowther, 2008, p. 1430). Alternative factors were explored to inform the current research foundation on plausible factors (external and/or internal) with influence on bystander action. By “recontextualizing the analysis of the behavior of bystanders,” different questions began to emerge (Levine, 1999, p. 1153).

I have highlighted how school violence prevention research needs the development of a more collaborative avenue. By including bystanders and seeking their recommendations, my current study goal was to confirm the importance of a bottom-up
approach to prevention. Past research mostly has been quantitative in nature and thereby resulted in the development of universal prevention strategies. By choosing to focus on the context of school violence before an incident occurs, the relevancy of the research data may be seen across a wide range of educational environments, roles, and outcomes (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). Data from the current study might be used across different disciplines and might be implemented in a more customized fashion for administration, practice, policy, and further research.
Chapter Three: A Hermeneutical Blueprint

The primary focus of this study was to understand how postsecondary students presume the role of a bystander during a school violence shooting incident. In particular, the goal was to highlight those factors with influence on hypothetical action so as to define the types of supports necessary in violence prevention efforts. Bystander decisions are complex in that they might be influenced by contextual factors, normative expectations, and self-efficacy (Stueve et al., 2006). Each decision is individual and influences have the potential to change. Therefore, to explore how individual involvement with the elements of our social world impact presumed student bystander action, along with those factors, which influence their decisions, I had to be able to revisit the phenomenon with each participant to obtain depth to the interpretation on a continually basis. I used a hermeneutical methodology that I established and named reconditioned hermeneutics. The methodological process was a series of phases as shown in Figure 3. Each phase is discussed in more detail within this chapter.
The objective of revisiting the phenomenon could not demand the “dogmatic conception of science” (Kratochwil, 2008, p. 97). Some voices, reactions, emotions, and expressions needed more repetition than others; therefore, the data collection process could have remained somewhat uncertain and undefined. The uncertainty that lies behind an individual’s reasons for a particular action is “absolutely resistant to scientific calculation” (Heritage, 1984, p. 36). By choosing to employ a hermeneutical methodology, I could illuminate the central questions involving how students interpret, presume, and characterize an appropriate bystander response during an incident of school violence.

**Qualitative Inquiry**

Social science has methodologies which traditionally were reliant on “identifying a population of events, gathering information on a sample of such events, and comparing and contrasting events to determine commonalities and differences” when examining issues in criminology, violence, and education (Harding, Fox, & Mehta, 2002, p. 175). This tradition is continuously demonstrated in publications such as the annual report, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, which provides easily accessible data on school
crime and safety to policymakers, educators, parents, and the general public (Dinkes, Cataldi, Lin-Kelly, & Snyder, 2007). Such reports and studies as those conducted through the FBI, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Secret Service are all quantitative in nature (Vossekuil, Reddy, Fein, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2000). Although such data are important, these methods make it difficult to collect data on precipitating factors, such as “how various causal factors interact to produce school shootings” (Harding et al., 2002, p. 175).

In considering postsecondary student bystander action during school violence shooting incidents, I investigated the factors which had potential for producing the action. An understanding of individual behavior should be examined within the perspective of four interrelated contexts: (a) individual, (b) interpersonal, (c) community, and (d) society as demonstrated in Figure 4 (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007).

![Figure 4. Model for understanding individual behaviors (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007).](image-url)
With a goal to identify bystander action, an examination was needed on the root of the behavior or the factors involved within each context. My intention was to develop a model of school bystander action and to suggest avenues for violence prevention. This goal was achieved through qualitative research with the creation of the ARISE Bystander Action Model, which is detailed in Chapter Six.

Qualitative methodology contributes to the social sciences through research, different from any other evaluation, because “its primary purpose is to generate or test theory and contribute to knowledge for the sake of knowledge” (Patton, 2002, p. 10). To generate successfully a model to assist in improving violence prevention programs and policies, I had to examine human action that is “socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of the situation” (Firestone, 1987, p. 16; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). According to Glesne (2011), qualitative research is the best method of “contributing to a greater understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and processes” (p. 39).

Ontological perspective entails the idea of understanding of being. The purpose of ontology is to better understand “the motivations that lie behind human nature,” or the theory of human action (della Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 26; Mantzavinos, 2005). In choosing to examine individual perceptions, the context of interpretation is most important (della Porta & Keating, 2008) in a qualitative inquiry involving student bystander action. Foundational questions are asked such as: (a) what student perceptions, explanations, and beliefs exist; and (b) what consequences of their behaviors are shown (Patton, 2002)?
Historically, researchers have chosen to employ phenomenology in seeking to discover and understand violence because violence lingers as an unknown entity in many forms, the unknown being “how varied our response can be” (Dodd, 2009, p. 15).

**Research Design**

The majority of qualitative research involving violence has been conducted with phenomenological methodologies (e.g., Dodd, 2009; Denzin, 1978). This phenomenological research methodology is used to explore the lived experience of human existence, experiences with violent incidents were those that researchers have hoped to capture (van Manen, 2007). While the essence of a “lived experience” was critical in the current research, I would have been unsuccessful in presenting a recommendation for school violence prevention efforts with mere description of an experience alone (Connolly, 1995, p. 26). For that reason I selected a different qualitative research method, hermeneutics.

**Hermeneutics**

The purpose of the hermeneutical method is to make sense of experience. In this research study, I asked participants hypothetically to experience a school violence shooting incident.

One of the tenets of hermeneutic phenomenological research is to see informants . . . as people who offer a picture of what it is like to be themselves as they make sense of an important experience (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000, p. 50).

Seeing people as themselves is best accomplished through narrative data collection in conversation with participants. Other qualitative methodologies such as case studies have tools with which to hear the narrative voice in research and does not provide for tiered data collection (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). As I chose to research
an experience before it occurred and not during the moment or after the fact, I had to be able to build layers of interpretation by continually revisiting the experience of informants. Hermeneutics simply means interpretation, and therefore, offered the most suitable methodology for my particular research question (Schmidt, 2006). Other potential methodologies would be used to examine the structure of the phenomena instead of how the phenomena are interpreted.

**Reconditioned Hermeneutics**

To implement hermeneutics as a method to interpret the meaning of bystander action within a particular context, I developed an amended hermeneutic circle to explore human behavior, which I named reconditioned hermeneutics for the purpose of clarity. My perspective on the departure from the traditional hermeneutic circle was empowered by a statement in the *Tao of Painting* (Sze & Wang, 1963):

> Some set great value on method, while others pride themselves on dispensing with methods. To be without method is deplorable, but to depend on method entirely is worse. You must first learn to observe the rules faithfully; afterwards, modify them according to your intelligence and capacity (as cited in Glesne, 2011, p. 3).

Hermeneutics is the art of understanding (Schmidt, 2006). As Schmidt (2006) indicated, “the goal of hermeneutic practice is to understand correctly what has been expressed by another” (p. 11). The essential goal of hermeneutics is to reconstruct the creative process of the originator (Schmidt, 2006). In reconditioned hermeneutics, I have identified the goal of reconstructing the process of situational interpretation to understand the behavior and to emphasize the importance of understanding a presumed action.
Schmidt (2006) stated that, “the better the interpreter knows the [originator], the easier it is to understand his train of thought” (p. 26). In a reconditioned hermeneutics design, I intended to understand the participant so that I understood the behavior and thereby progressed toward the ultimate goals of this study: reasoning, coherence, and recommendations. Understanding the participants was achieved by engaging them in a series of responses in a continually reflexive question and answer methodology, referred to as the hermeneutic circle.

**Hermeneutic Circle**

Within the practice of hermeneutics, the hermeneutic circle is used to gain an understanding of a particular phenomenon by way of “repeatedly and cyclically moving between the parts and the whole” (Paterson & Higgs, 2005, p. 345). The circle is not a metaphor but rather is a “realistic description of the process of understanding which moves from a given premise to embrace a new situation in order to return to the origin of the question” (Klostermaier, 2008, p. 81). In practice, continued reprising and moving between the parts of the phenomenon and the whole was used, “with the objective of gaining a growing understanding of the phenomenon” (Paterson & Higgs, 2005, p. 345).
Figure 5. The basic form of the hermeneutic circle.

The circle is a self-restating process derived from the symbolic meaning of the circle in the Indian cultural context—*samsara* (Klostermaier, 2008). Repetitious motion between the parts (e.g., focus groups, interviews, research journal) and the whole (phenomenon) is partnered with the depth of dialogue between the participants and the researcher to provide a rigorous method in which the credibility of the research design is enhanced. Simply stated, this method allows the research to confirm itself.

**Hermeneutics and Educational Research**

Hermeneutics has been widely accepted for centuries among disciplines within the humanities, particularly among philosophy and religion (Klostermaier, 2008). Initially, hermeneutics became associated with the interpretation of texts, mostly biblical texts, during the 17th century. Over time, philosophers transgressed hermeneutics into variations and elaborations for subsequent methodologies (e.g., Wilhelm Dilthey [1833-1911], Martin Heidegger [1889-1976], and Friedrich Schleiermacher [1768-1834]. Hermeneutics is a qualitative methodology in which are established both context and meaning for what people do. To my knowledge, this methodology has not been utilized
in the examination of school violence prevention, nor bystander action. Researchers have identified applications for hermeneutic inquiry beyond the interpretation of legends, literature, and historical documents (Cohen et al., 2000). Kneller (1984) offered the following four principles for the application of hermeneutics to other realms of perspective research:

- Understanding a human act or product, and hence all learning, is like interpreting a text.
- All interpretation occurs within a tradition.
- Interpretation involves opening [oneself] to a text and questioning it.
- Interpretation of a text must be done in light of a situation (p. 68).

Since hermeneutics can be applied to other realms of research, a participant could describe a human act (phenomenologically), and a researcher could interpret the act (hermeneutically), and thereby provide an understanding of bystander action. I used the reconditioned hermeneutic method to establish context and meaning for what bystanders do (Patton, 2002). In turn, I constructed an interpretation of the data that resulted in the newly developed ARISE bystander action model that will be recommended for school violence prevention programs and policies in and among postsecondary institutions.

**Sample**

With the implementation of qualitative methodology, the current study had to remain flexible, allowing the design to continually emerge with the opportunity for additional questions to surface (Patton, 2002). I initially proposed a purposive sampling
strategy, but the process was adaptable should I have needed to respond to unexpected insights regarding the school violence phenomenon.

**Sample Selection**

The participant population was defined as postsecondary students within the Western region of the United States. This region included students attending institutions within Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Nevada, Montana, and Idaho. To address the research inquiry of bystander action in postsecondary school violence shooting incidents, I employed a purposive sample strategy (Patton, 2002).

The logic and power of purposeful sampling . . . leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 2002, p. 46).

My intention was to obtain research participants through network sampling, one of the 15 different purposive sampling strategies Patton (2002) introduced. Although there was potential to implement a typical sampling strategy or maximum variation strategy, both sample size and expert source of were challenging. A network sample worked well with a hermeneutical methodology because quality data could be obtained within a short period of time (Marshall, 1996). Purposive random sampling as often is used to obtain validity in the data; however, to stay within the realm of the hermeneutical method, I had to obtain in-depth information and would have been unable to establish relationships with participants who were selected randomly. The saliency among the participants in this research study was identified through the research process and not the initial sample selection.
A network sample allowed me to obtain participants through communication with individuals who knew other individuals that might meet the research requirements and might be interested in participating in the research (Creswell, 2007). These individuals are referred to as key informants (Patton, 2002). These individuals, who “as a result of their personal skills, or position within a society, are able to provide more information and a deeper insights into what is going on around them” (Marshall, 1996, p. 92). Many researchers (e.g., Peters & Waterman, 1982; Wright & Decker, 1997) have chosen to obtain such a sample population by contacting a broad group of individuals to identify other key informants. I selected key informants based on Tremblay’s (1989) four ideal characteristics: (a) willingness, (b) communicability, (c) knowledge, and (d) role within the community. Key informants were identified as faculty at postsecondary institutions within the Western Region.

Contact was made with western regional members of the Students for Concealed Carry (SCC) organization along with faculty members and department chairs at Colorado State University, the University of Denver, and Pima Medical Institute (PMI or “Pima”). All of the key informants that I originally reached out to had previously shared interest in allowing participant recruitment within their courses. In some instances, students might receive course credit for participation in the research, and some course instructors indicated that they would offer students extra credit points for participating in social science research on campus. Of the 11 total key informants contacted among the various organizations and institutions, only two responded—both instructors at Pima Medical Institute in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This was the only campus with leaders who responded to my request for participant recruitment on their campus. I was able to recruit
students enrolled in the Career Preparation and Medical Office Assistant courses in the July and August 2011 summer session. The Pima campus in Colorado Springs, Colorado, served as a representation of all Pima Medical Institute campuses in and among the western region.

**Study Setting: Pima Medical Institute**

Pima Medical Institute is a medical career college with campuses located in the Western region of the United States. Pima has 13 campuses in seven different states each with a variety of medical program offerings. The Colorado Springs, Colorado campus was established in 2002 and relocated to a new facility in 2008. Twenty-three medical career programs are available among the 13 different PMI campuses. Students can enroll in certificate, Associate’s Degree or Bachelor’s Degree programs. The Colorado Springs campus has seven different medical program offerings: (a) Health Care Administration, (b) Medical Assisting, (c) Medical Office Assistant, (d) Pharmacy Technician, (e) Phlebotomy Technician, (f) Veterinary Technician, and (g) Veterinary Assistant.

**The Students**

I conducted my research during the 2011 academic year, and data from that year is discussed within this chapter. As of January 2011, the Colorado Springs PMI campus had an estimated 40 employees and 446 actively enrolled students. Of those active students, the majority (89%) were females. In addition, most students were Caucasian, with smaller percentages of students representing the racial/ethnic groups of Hispanic, Black, Asian, and Indian students (K. Foley, personal communication, 2011). The majority of students who attend Pima are female, age 18 to 35 years old, and of low socioeconomic status.
Three different program times are offered: (a) morning from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., (b) afternoon from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and (c) evening from 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.). The morning and afternoon programs are held Monday through Friday. The evening programs are held Monday through Thursday with no Friday evening classes. The majority of students (51%) are enrolled in morning programs (See Table 6).

Table 6.

**Program Enrollment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Enrolled students</th>
<th>% of student population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection Methods: Triangulation**

As Denzin (1978) defined, triangulation is the “combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (as cited in Jick, 1979, p. 602). Within the social sciences, triangulation is used as a process to ensure that the results are valid (Bouchard, 1976). By choosing to triangulate my data collection in the current study, I intended to capture what was a more holistic and contextual portrayal of the participants. I obtained a more comprehensive perspective regarding bystander action as commonly achieved with a qualitative approach. “Qualitative data [plays] an especially prominent role by eliciting data and suggesting conclusions to which other methods would be blind” (Jick, 1979, p. 603). Triangulated data collection methods of focus groups, interviews, and
observations were used to enrich my understanding of bystander action and were utilized as space for a deeper scope of understanding to egress, which then could be shared in the betterment of prevention strategies (Jick, 1979). For both a rich and comprehensive interpretation of bystander action, I employed the following triangulation of methods into a spiral design of reconditioned hermeneutics (See Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Reconditioned hermeneutic spiral.

Within the illustrated spiral sequence, I addressed the whole, followed by the parts, and then revisited the whole with recommendations for representing a true collective interpretation.

**The Process**

Several qualitative techniques were utilized in the reconditioned hermeneutic method that I established. As detailed later in this chapter, the research process included the following: (a) administer a preliminary questionnaire, (b) conduct focus group phase I, (c) conduct individual interviews, and (d) conduct focus group phase II. During all steps of the research process, I also reflected in the researcher journal. Figure 7 shows the process more clearly.
Figure 7. Research process.

Preliminary Questionnaire

In August 2008, I piloted the preliminary questionnaire among a convenience sample of eight participants to assist in developing clear, concise, and efficient delivery of questions. Participant responses were expected to be descriptive in nature, as the participant was given the opportunity to write open-ended responses without limitations.

Based on the limited key informants who responded to participant recruitment as noted earlier within this chapter, Pima Medical Institute (PMI) was the only sample of students to participate in the current study. In July 2011, I elicited a response from each participant at PMI through e-mail delivered to instructors and faculty. Within this correspondence, I provided an overview of the research and the purpose of the research study, both in association with an invitation to participate (See Appendix A). Instructors at PMI distributed the invitation to participate in the study to 47 students among both their morning and afternoon classes. In the end, 39 students completed the preliminary questionnaire, resulting in 83% participation. The preliminary questionnaire (See Appendix B) consisted of 10 questions pertaining to the participants’ demographic
information, the college/university which they attended, their knowledge of past school violence shooting incidents, their knowledge of school policies involving student bystanders, their perception of safety within and among their educational environments, and whether they personally have had a violent experience.

The preliminary questionnaire was offered through the Survey Monkey website (www.surveymonkey.com) as an Internet-based tool with direct participant access to the questionnaire from any computer, along with the services of collection and management of questionnaire responses in a summary. All response data was, and will continue to be for at least seven years, kept confidential and secured by the researcher. This preliminary questionnaire was a tool used to identify research participants who met the requirements of participation, and used to gain basic understanding of their identities.

Focus Groups

The focus group method was established during the World War II with historical references to the research of Lazarsfeld and Stanton (1944) who examined radio programs and communication during the World War II era (Markova, Linell, Grossen, & Orvig, 2007). The method was transcended into market research and finally was ventured into the field of social science. A focus group typically includes 6 to 10 participants who unite in a discussion of questions posed by the researcher—those questions which are “in the focus” (Markova et al., 2007, p. 33; Patton, 2002).

In the current study, each focus group session was conducted using informal guidelines to engage the participants in natural conversation with the researcher (Patton, 2002). All group sessions were tape-recorded in an effort to best capture the voices of the participants. This technique “[offered] maximum flexibility to pursue information in
whatever direction appears to be appropriate” from talking with individuals (Patton, 2002, p. 342). The focus group sessions were guided, yet most questions transgressed from the immediate context itself. Each guide was used as an interview framework for the questions, the sequence, and the potential depth of discussion.

*Focus Group Phase I.* According to Krueger (1988), the size of a focus group is conditioned by two factors: The group should be small enough so that all voices are heard, and the group should be large enough for a diverse perspective to be obtained. Focus groups that are employed during the initial stage of a research project are semi-unstructured and open-ended so that new ideas and hypotheses can emerge. This is ideal because it allows for those “ideas and hypotheses that are generated [to be] then further tested by other, less intensive methods like surveys, interviews, or questionnaires” (Markova et al., 2007, p. 33). This was the concept behind the design for focus group phase I. These focus group members discussed the research question in a broad sense to extract commonalities and discourse, which I chose to later revisit with participants (See Appendix C). The goal of focus group phase I was to extract patterns and descriptive findings from the discussion such as the example, “almost all participants reported feeling fear when they rappelled down the cliff” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Three sessions of focus group phase I were conducted in the current study. A summary of the session details of Phase I are shown in Figure 8.
Vignettes

Hazel (1995) states that vignettes are stories to “concrete examples of people and their behaviors on which participants can offer comment or opinion. The researcher can then facilitate a discussion around the opinions expressed, or particular terms used in the participants’ comments” (p. 2). Vignettes are used to provide an opportunity to understand a participants’ subjective belief system. Although meaningful research is conducted to examine how a bystander responds during a school violence shooting incident, to create an incident of such caliber, or engage with individuals who recently experienced a violent incident is unethical. Instead, a story or situation with reference to a hypothetical incident may be discussed among participants who may be presented with a bystander role in the future with the potential to increase understanding of bystander action.

For the purposes of this research, I initially developed three hypothetical vignettes, depicting school violence shooting incidents in which students are placed in a bystander role. As researchers (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006) identified, these vignettes
were varied in terms of immediacy of danger, individuals involved, uncertainty of the situation, and locations where the incident occurred. Each vignette was derived from an account of a true historical school violence situation to reflect on the importance of authenticity (Neff, 1979). Vignettes are more productive if the situations presented appear real and conceivable to participants (Barter & Renold, 2000). To obtain successful discussion from the vignettes, I piloted the original three vignettes before initiating any data collection.

**Pilot research.** In an effort to identify vignettes to stimulate a more focused, verbose, and fruitful discussion among research participants, I conducted a pilot study in July 2010. The pilot involved the protocol for focus group phase I. The sample population included four total participants.
Table 7.

*Pilot Research Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Enrollment Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current Student</th>
<th>Alumnus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment Status</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Highest Level of Education Completed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BS/BS</th>
<th>MA/MHA/MS</th>
<th>PhD/MD/PharmD/EdD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Level of Education Completed</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BS/BS</th>
<th>MA/MHA/MS</th>
<th>PhD/MD/PharmD/EdD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>46-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Race/Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Region of Residence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>West</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Northeast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region of Residence</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The goal was not only to ask the protocol questions involving each of the initial three vignettes, but also to improve the questions, the research method, and the overall facilitation techniques.

Researchers enter a pilot study with a different frame of mind from the one they have when going into the full-scale study. The idea is not to get data per se but to learn about your research process, interview questions, observation techniques, and yourself . . . a pilot study readies you for gathering data (Glesne, 2011, pp. 56-57).

Notable outcomes of the pilot study have been identified as follows:

- Only two of the three hypothetical vignettes were effective for launching an extensive, questionable discussion.
• Further details of the hypothetical scenario were needed in all of the vignettes to reduce misconceptions.

• Images of the weapons discussed would help participants view the hypothetical situation in a more realistic context.

In the process of data collection, kinesis, which is the movement of an organism in response to a stimulus, also should be documented (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2012). The need for kinesis to be documented was apparent while participants read the vignettes and then shared their presumed responses. The discussion was interactive and participants visually could represent their responses along with verbal discussion to capture all dimensions of their perceptions.

Following the pilot study the vignettes were modified and the two most notable for igniting an in-depth discussion among participants were used in current study. They are provided exactly as the participants received them during focus group phase I in Appendix D.

**Purpose of vignettes.** Typically vignettes are employed within a quantitative methodology, “as a self-contained method or following a large scale survey questionnaire. Commonly, participants are presented with a number of standardized scenarios and asked to answer a range of questions using predetermined categories” (Barter & Renold, 2000, p. 308). In qualitative research methodologies, Hughes (1998) suggested that vignettes have benefit for understanding “individuals’ perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes to a wide range of social issues” (as cited in Barter & Renold, 2000, p. 310). The most important aspect of using vignettes was who participants are asked to engage
within the presented story. By applying a non-directional approach to the use of vignettes in this research study, I “[left] space for [participants] to define the situation in their own terms”—which is the best illustration of their individual action (Barter & Renold, 2000, p. 310). Vignettes have been proven as successful when used in conjunction with other data methodologies; hence, a notable benefit of their use includes “the flexibility they provide in multi-technique approaches” (Barter & Renold, 2000, p. 311).

During focus group phase I, each participant was given a copy of the same hypothetical school violence shooting vignette to read and discuss during our session (See Appendix D). Which of the two vignettes a focus group members received was varied depending on which scheduled session they participated in. I randomly selected a vignette by blindly pulling one from a file folder before the start of each session. After taking a moment to read over the vignette quietly, we started our discussion. Each time the tables were set in an open rectangle arrangement – the seating arrangement within the classrooms. I sat in the middle of the rectangular space on a chair, surrounded by the participants on three of my four sides. No one sat directly behind me. The tape recorder was placed on a table nearby so all voices would be recorded successfully. The focus group discussions were approximately 80 to 90 minutes in length and each time the participants and I would engage in conversations such as the following:

Researcher: So, if you guys can just talk to me about what you think violence is. What would be considered violent acts? So, not necessarily just this example that’s talking about shooting, right? What else is violence?
Female: Hazing.
Female: Domestic violence.
Female: Rape.
Female: Intimidation.
Female: Making fun of someone.
Male: It’s any act that one human puts to another human that harms them in any way.
Researcher: Okay. Good. So, when you think of bystanders in violence . . . what do most bystanders tend to do?
Female: Sit and watch.
Female: Keep walking.
Researcher: And why do we act like that usually as a bystander?
Female: Fear.
Male: Because you don’t know what else to do.
Female: Someone else will take care of it. (Focus group session one, July 14, 2011)

**Individual Interviews**

At the time of each individual interview, no recent (within the prior 4 to 6 weeks) school violence shooting incidents had occurred in the United States. An awareness of any current violent incident, particularly within a postsecondary environment, was confirmed by asking participants to reflect on the most recent event. Participant responses validated any potential for emotional sensitivity or bias.
As identified in the research process in Figure 8, my intention in this research design was to recruit individual interview participants from the three different sessions of focus group phase I. Six participants expressed interest in participating in individual interviews; however, one participant never arrived at the scheduled interview and another removed herself due to past violent experience. Four participants completed individual interviews, at a 67% participation rate. During these individual interviews, participants revisited the hypothetical vignettes discussed within their focus group session and addressed questions in more detail to obtain the “rich variation of human experience” in the extreme raw form (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Each individual interview was tape-recorded for data collection purposes.

The interviews were conducted in private classrooms on the Pima Medical Institute campus in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Each participant had arranged a time, either before or after classes, that was convenient with their schedule. Only the researcher and the participant were in the classroom at the time. The interviews were held around noon, either before or after students were released from classes. Each time, I sat to the right of the participant at a large rectangular table with the table recorder placed directly between the two of us.

Each interview included reflection upon the themes and hypotheses that had emerged from the earlier focus group sessions. From this content, I asked participants six different types of open-ended questions to maintain clarity in facilitator delivery as well as individual response. These six questions included themes of: (a) experience/behavior, (b) opinion and values, (c) feelings, (d) knowledge, (e) sensory, and (f) background (Patton, 2002). Each question was a presupposition that I used to draw upon a
descriptive detailed response instead of merely reaffirming a phenomenon’s existence.

Again, referencing an interview guide (See Appendix E), the primary goal of each individual interview was “to minimize any potential imposition of predetermined responses” (Patton, 2002, p. 353).

The individual interview lasted approximately 60 minutes in length on average and contained many discussions similar to that of the following:

Researcher: If we had that hypothetical scenario happen what do you specifically think you would have done?

Justice: Hmm. That is a good question. Honestly I don’t know. I know probably first would start thinking about, you know, the kids, as usual, and that they need me. But I probably think I would probably just freeze for a moment because I really wouldn’t know what to do.

Researcher: So, if it had been more in place kind of like fire drills and tornado routines where, like, if a situation like that happened that you knew we had to – we turned off the lights, we got on the floor, we locked the doors; all those steps . . .

Justice: Right. Less likely to freeze because there were steps to take.

(Individual Interview, July 21, 2011)

Researcher: Okay. So in the focus group yesterday, what would you say is the most important experience that you had or thought that you had?

Jeanie: I never really thought very much about safety in school and it opened a lot of – like, opened my eyes a lot to the safety
procedures and stuff here at Pima. Or the lack of safety

procedures.

Researcher: Anything other than realizing that? Other things that people said;

anything like that that you thought was important?

Jeanie: Just discussing what you would do in that situation. Like, it just

opened my eyes to other things that you can do that I wouldn’t

normally think of. . . . I automatically would just jump to trying to
diffuse it the best that I could. (Individual Interview, July 15, 2011)

Focus group phase II. I introduced the themes obtained from focus group phase I

and opened them to group analysis via the Internet (See Appendix F). The information

that I obtained during the initial in-vivo coding process was the foundation of the second
focus group discussion and was used to make the “abstract and diffuse ideas and
assumptions more concrete” (Markova et al., 2007, p. 140). By revisiting the outcomes
of their previous discussions, each participant was more involved in the creation of
socially shared knowledge, in particular, student bystander action. The phase II process
allowed participants to confirm the “view” that I had of their world, and reaffirmed
whether I had “interpreted their terminology, judgments, and complexities of their
individual perceptions and experiences” (Patton, 2002, p. 348).

In the interest of time, as well as convenience of meeting, participants had an
opportunity to provide their feedback via e-mail communication. I sent an e-mail to their
course instructors who shared the document with those students who participated in the
study. Per the feedback from the instructors, the participants discussed the themes that I
provided openly in the classroom with each other and reflected on the experience for those who were not in attendance. In the end, I received an e-mail back from both instructors with a statement from the participants within that course section, indicating that they were pleased with the themes identified and agreed with the content.

It was my intention that by including research participants in focus group phase II, I would be able to: (a) verify that perspectives have been accurately reflected; (b) identify potentially problematic information (e.g., political, personal); and (c) assist in the development of new ideas and interpretations (Glesne, 2011, p. 212).

**The Researcher Journal**

Qualitative inquiry provides opportunities not only to learn about the experiences of others, but also to examine the experiences that the inquirer brings to the inquiry, experiences that will, to some extent, have an effect on what is studied and help share, for better or worse, what is discovered (Tallmadge, 1997, p. ix).

By incorporating the use of a researcher journal into the reconditioned hermeneutic spiral design, I generated the potential to gather additional data essential to understanding student bystander perceptions. These descriptive data portray the role of the researcher and my response to the hypothetical violence scenarios, which were a reflection of the words shared in discussions. My own emotional, physical, or spiritual response to the data and the research process may serve to be beneficial. My intention was that by noting my identities and how they intersect with aspects of the research data, that I would learn even more about the participants and, therefore, more accurately represent them in my research outcomes.
Data Validity, Analysis, & Interpretation

Protection of Participants

In order to minimize potential risk, I introduced the following precautions:

- All participants were given the opportunity to deny answering any question or to choose to terminate their consent to be interviewed.
- All participants signed a detailed form outlining their consent to be interviewed and audio-taped for this research and for the publication of the results for the purpose of this research study.
- As part of the consent process, resources were identified if the participant needed to seek assistance for any psychologically and/or emotionally difficult experiences resulting from the interview session.
- Participants were informed that any identifying information would be removed from the data collected. All information recorded was transcribed and was used only for the purpose of this research study.

Trustworthiness

All information collected during the data collection process was both factual and authentic. No modifications were made to the interviews. By addressing any introductory bias, I was able to obtain successfully multiple perspectives, interests, and realities (Patton, 2002). Objective perspectives potentially may remain too one-sided; therefore, I allowed for multiple realities to be described in the current study. As identified by qualitative researchers, multiple realities can exist along with many truths (Patton, 2002). Content was not extrapolated; it was interpreted. Participants were
provided with the opportunity to revisit the information during a second focus group session to confirm the accuracy of interpretation and engage in deriving recommendations.

**Data Analysis**

Before data analysis, all focus groups and individual interviews were transcribed. All field notes and researcher journal entries were maintained in digital format throughout the research process. For each transcript, a Microsoft Word document was created and password protected. Only the researcher has access to the original transcription files.

During this research study data was treated as:

referring to and representing phenomena (in terms of feelings, perceptions, experiences, or events) which exist apart from the data and the setting in which the data were captured or generated, and the analyst is concerned with the accuracy of the data and of his or her account (Spencer, Ritchie, & O’Connor, 2003, p. 202).

The general process in which the data were analyzed involved stages. I initiated the analysis with the process of placing the transcripts of both focus group phase I sessions and individual interviews into poetic text (Mears, 2005). Using the data displays generated, I then implemented the process of in vivo coding to identify themes found within the poetic texts.

The systematic use of in vivo codes can be used to develop a ‘bottom up’ approach to the derivation of categories from the content of the data. Initial coding, then, should help us to identify themes, patterns, events, and actions that are of interest to the researcher and that provide a means of organizing data sets. (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 32)
I then used those themes to develop a cognitive map from which I generated the final creation of the ARISE Bystander Action model. Each stage of this process is displayed in Figure 9 below, as well as further described in Chapter Six of this dissertation.

*Figure 9. Data analysis process.*
Chapter Four: The Students Move Forward, Unabated

Years after the Columbine massacre, people from psychologists to law-enforcement officials to survivors have continued to ponder why such tragedies occur and how they can be prevented. These perspectives on school violence all play a significant role in determining the circumstances and sequence of events that led up to April 20, 1999, and the young men’s forty-nine-minute rampage. With luck, this understanding will prevent similar occurrences from plaguing other campuses and taking additional lives (Marsico, 2011, p. 13-14).

Safety in the Numbers

I chose to examine the safety and crime of the PMI campus in Colorado Springs to postulate the general security of the neighborhood that the campus is located in. Participants indicated that Pima was located in an area with a high crime rate. I wanted to obtain a better understanding of the safety surrounding the school along with how the school appears in comparison to other similar schools and their annual reports.

Annual Report

Schools are required to publish an annual report each year by October 1st that contains 3 years of campus crime statistics and certain security policy statements including: (a) sexual assault policies which assure basic victims' rights, (b) the law enforcement authority of campus police, and (c) where students should go to report crimes. The report is to be made available automatically to all current students and employees while prospective students and employees are to be notified of its existence and afforded an opportunity to request a copy. Schools can comply using the Internet so long as the required recipients are notified and provided the exact Internet address where
the report can be found and paper copies are available upon request. A copy of the statistics must also be provided to the U.S. Department of Education.

**Incidence**

In an ideal world, colleges and universities are safe havens, “institution(s) of social harmony built on charitable foundations that work to enhance the intellectual abilities and professional capabilities of all members of a collaborative academic community” (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010, p. 1). Yet, a dark shadow falls on the quintessential ivory tower. The impact of more recent postsecondary rampage shootings (Virginia Polytechnical University, Delaware State University, Louisiana Technical College, and Northern Illinois University) continues to weigh on hearts across the country and the world. These incidents, along with many other incidents, have impacted an awareness of campus safety and security. It was imperative that I understand how often postsecondary school shooting incidents occur in the United States as I talk with students regarding hypothetical school shooting incidents.

Data makes it challenging “to be certain about the incidence of school violence, as there is a general lack of systematically collected data” (Cowie & Jennifer, 2007, p. 13). The media plays a pivotal role in how members of society obtain information. Graber (1997) stated that, “the media interprets the meaning behind such covered events and then places these events in context for their audiences, with speculation provided on the consequences of such recorded actions (as cited in McCabe & Martin, 2005, p. 7). What is the incidence rate of postsecondary school violence in the United States? To obtain empirical data on the incidence rate, I referenced the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), which uses the U.S. Department of Education Campus Safety and Security Data
Analysis Cutting Tool. The tool provides an opportunity for the public to customize a report on campus crime statistics. Data were obtained from the OPE Campus Safety and Security Statistics website database to which are submitted annually data from all postsecondary institutions receiving Title IV funding.

I elected to review the available data through four different representations:

- crime statistics for all postsecondary education institutions within the state of Colorado;
- crime statistics for all schools within the United States that are similar to Pima Medical Institute (meaning that they identify as private for-profit, less than 2 years, with enrollment less than 500);
- crime statistics for all schools within Colorado are similar to Pima Medical Institute (again, private for-profit, less than 2 years, with enrollment less than 500); and
- crime statistics particular for Pima Medical Institute in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

I chose this particular outlook on the aggregated data for postsecondary institutions after I discovered the following statement by Bennet-Johnson, “violence in American society has become a regular part of the college and university campus experience” (2004, as cited in Dukes & Harris, 2007, p. 137). I asked myself, how would a student define regular? I needed a clearer understanding of the statistics for institutions similar to PMI as compared to other postsecondary institutions. I wanted to determine whether a common variable existed among like institutions.
Criminal Umbrage: Pima Medical Institute, Colorado, and U.S. Postsecondary Institutions

The crime statistics found on the [U.S. Department of Education—Office of Postsecondary Education] website represent alleged criminal offenses reported to campus security authorities and/or local law enforcement agencies. Therefore, the data collected do not reflect prosecutions or convictions for crimes (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2011, p. 2).

The Office of Postsecondary Education provides national crime statistical data for colleges and universities in four parts for both individual institutions and/or group of campuses: (a) arrests, (b) criminal offenses, (c) hate crimes, and (d) disciplinary action. I chose to examine the criminal offenses statistics for the year 2010, the most recent data available on the website. Figure 10 shows the data available regarding criminal offenses within the state of Colorado at any type of postsecondary institution in the year of 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal Offenses—on campus</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder/ Non-negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offenses, forcible</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offenses, non-forcible</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10. Criminal Offenses, Colorado Postsecondary Institutions
Figure 11 illustrates the data available regarding criminal offenses within the United States among those schools identified as private for-profit, less than 2-year schools, with less than 500 enrollments.

![Criminal Offenses—on campus]

United States: postsecondary institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder/ Non-negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offenses, forcible</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offenses, non-forcible</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 11. Criminal Offenses, U.S. Postsecondary Institutions*

Figure 12 shows the data available regarding criminal offenses within the state of Colorado among those schools identifies as private for-profit, less than 2-year schools, with less than 500 enrollments.

![Criminal Offenses—on campus]

Colorado: postsecondary institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder/ Non-negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offenses, forcible</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offenses, non-forcible</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 12. Criminal Offenses, Colorado Postsecondary Institutions*
Figure 13 shows the data available regarding criminal offenses within Pima Medical Institute, Colorado Springs, Colorado campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal Offenses—on campus</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murder/ Non-negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offenses, forcible</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offenses, non-forcible</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated assault</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 13. Criminal Offenses, Pima Medical Institute Colorado Springs*

No reported incidents of criminal offenses existed on the PMI campus in Colorado Springs, Colorado in the year 2010. I obtained additional data for 2008-2010, noting that only one incident had been documented.

Throughout the United States, among those schools similar to PMI, 242 criminal offenses were reported on campus in 2010. Of those events, a significant percentage involved both robbery (26%) and burglary (48%). Documented incidents among these types of schools significantly had decreased within the state of Colorado (one incidence of robbery in 2010) and Pima Medical Institute in Colorado Springs (one incidence of robbery last occurring in 2008). This was reflective of the FBI *Crime in the United States 2010* report, which indicated a decrease in both property crime and violent crime in the United States (FBI, 2011, p 1).
I was interested particularly in the aggregated data for those campuses identified as private for-profit, less than 2-year, with less than 500 enrollments campuses. As with other community and vocational colleges, these institutions “play a unique role in the higher education marketplace and represent a unique segment of American higher education” (Milliron & de los Santos, 2004, as cited in Dukes & Harris, 2007, p. 135).

Pima Medical Institute has an open door community college model which means that the institution provides education at the students’ convenience, on-ground and online, as well as morning, afternoon, and evening class schedules (Brawer, 1987). This open door education model “meet(s) the educational and social development needs of a distinctive population of students” (Dukes & Harris, 2007, p. 136). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), students at these community...
Colleges were of an average age of 28 years old (2012). Additionally, 57% are female and 58% of all community college students attend on a part-time basis (AACC, 2012).

**Colorado Springs, Colorado**

*Figure 15. Main entrance, Pima Medical Institute, Colorado Springs, Colorado.*

I recruited research participants from the Colorado Springs, Colorado, Pima Medical Institute campus. This campus is located in the South end of town on Citadel Drive.
Preparedness—Ready for Anything?

I scheduled a morning meeting with the Pima Medical Institute (PMI) Colorado Springs campus office manager for September 30, 2011. My intent was to gain access to current campus enrollment numbers, student demographics, campus crime statistic reporting, and any type of violence prevention initiated by campus leaders. The office manager met me with a student orientation packet, a copy of the Emergency Preparedness Plan, and a willingness to help me obtain any data that I needed.

As I spoke of my research and my questions for Pima, she noted that the campus had implemented an Emergency Preparedness Plan as of April 2011. The policy was (PMI, 2011):

- PMI is committed to supporting the safety and welfare of its students, faculty, staff and visitors.
• PMI shall conduct continuous planning to minimize the risk of personal injury and property loss from critical incidents.

• The plan is designed to maximize human safety and survival, preserve property, minimize danger, restore normal operations, and assure responsive communications with the community and responders (p. 1).

As I examined the Emergency Preparedness Plan in my meeting with the office manager, I noticed that it read “Evacuation Plan” in the footer. I realized that the procedure was specified for “the event of a fire or other incident that requires evacuation” (PMI, 2011, p. 2). The procedure in the “event of a fire or other incident that requires evacuation” involves the following:

Three short blasts of a bullhorn or sounding of the fire alarm will be initiated—signaling a building evacuation;

Use designated evacuation route;

All students and staff are the meeting in the northside parking lot of the building next to Galley Road;

Faculty members are to account for all students present in class that day (PMI, 2011, p.2)

Figure 17. Pima evacuation procedure. Adapted from “Emergency Preparedness Plan” by Pima Medical Institute, 2011.

Immediately, I questioned the office manager about an alternate emergency plan if campus evacuation was not possible. She noted that no such plan existed. Also, many elements within the existing evacuation plan might be addressed to bystanders as well as other types of incidents. This Emergency Preparedness Plan left me with questions for PMI students:
• How do you define violence?
• What action steps are you required to take during a violent incident?
• What is your personal sense of safety here on the PMI campus?
• What safety measures would you recommend to campus administration?

PMI has an Emergency Management Team (EMT) comprised of members of both staff and faculty (PMI, 2011). The EMT consists of nine individuals including the Campus Director, Associate Campus Director, Faculty Coordinator, Business Office Manager, Veterinary Program Director, Career Placement Director, Financial Aid Director, Medical Assistant Lead Instructor, and the Receptionist.

The Reality of Preparedness

As noted, PMI has an emergency plan. More accurately stated, PMI has an evacuation plan. The National School Safety and Security Services (2009) reports that crisis plans often exist with unclear content and many staff members are not trained on their school crisis plans. I was beginning to assume that PMI was in a similar situation. Not so much that the content of the evacuation plan was questionable, but a large amount of content was absent related to shootings, lockdowns, and the mere inability to evacuate during a violent incident. “As universities struggle to adapt to the changing demands associated with campus emergency planning and management, much of the initial effort goes into defining what it is that institutions are anticipating” (LaBlanc, Krepel, Johnson, & Herrmann, 2010, p. 53). An emergency is defined as “a sudden, urgent, unforeseen occurrence requiring immediate action” (LaBlanc et al., 2010, p. 53).

Researchers and safety experts have little data supporting the success of existing crisis plans. “School crisis plans also have not been tested and exercised through tabletop
and other exercises to see if what is on paper might actually work in a real emergency” (National School Safety and Security Services, 2009, ¶ 1). When I questioned Foley as to whether the plan had been tested, she noted that the campus had had one practice fire drill that she could recall since January 2011.

To assess the general sense of safety of the participants from PMI, I examined the U.S. Department of Education public data sets for various categories of violent and non-violent crimes committed on campus since 2009. The 2010 U.S. Department of Education data chronicles alleged criminal offenses reported to campus security authorities and/or local police—this does not necessarily reflect prosecutions or convictions for crime (American School Search, 2012). Statistically, Pima displays a low risk of violence; this statistic is counterintuitive to the sense of students. In Figure 18, the percent crime chance is shown as calculated by the American School Search (2012). This statistic is subjective and reflects an approximation of the likelihood that any student would experience a particular criminal offense while enrolled at that particular institution (American School Search, 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal Offense</th>
<th># Reported</th>
<th>% Crime Chance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>murder</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negligent manslaughter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forcible sex offense</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>robbery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggravated assault</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burglary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motor vehicle theft</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18. Alleged Criminal Offenses, Pima Medical Institute, CO
According to the PMI office manager (K. Foley, personal communication, 2011), the campus crime statistics are calculated by a list of crimes within a particular radius of the campus, provided to PMI on a monthly basis by the Colorado Springs Police Department. As noted in the data, the majority of violent incidents were vehicle theft and burglaries. Foley personally believed that the overall crime rate had increased within recent academic years. She reflected on a recent incident (within one month of our interview according to Foley) at the Toys’R’Us next door with which Pima shares a parking lot. A woman was spotted walking around the parking lot with a large machine gun. Foley also mentioned a second incident at the Applebee’s restaurant across the street where a gunman was holding patrons hostage. Both incidents required that administrators place the PMI campus on lockdown for a short amount of time. This information lends itself to more questions about safety and entrances and exits, facility access, and monitoring. These questions were raised during focus group sessions with students.

**Neighborhood Watch**

Following my interview with the office manager, I investigated in detail the safety of the neighborhood by zip code of the PMI campus. Using SpotCrime (2012), I geographically plotted reported crimes identified as an assault, burglary, robbery, and/or shooting within a three-month period (January 1, 2012 – March 25, 2012), in a three-block radius (in blue) of Figure 19, the PMI campus. The map identified the following (the red asterisk indicates the location of PMI):
This report not only documents the type of crime reported, but also the date, time, and location of reported crimes. Using this information, I identified five assaults, four robberies, eight burglaries, and five shootings that occurred during the three-month period previously referenced, within three blocks of the PMI campus. I wondered how safe was this neighborhood of Colorado Springs, Colorado? The city of Colorado Springs uses the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the national crime reporting standard that replaced the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system (City of Colorado Springs, 2010). I decided to explore what the local police department had reported. In the *Colorado Springs Police Department Annual Report*, 82 counts for a “shooting” call were documented (City of Colorado Springs, 2010, p. 13) out of 295,517
calls for service (p. 8). Statistically, this number is 0.28% of all police calls for service within Colorado Springs. Although a low rate, I compared this to the number of shootings reported within the referenced area (three-block radius identified in the previous map) of PMI in 2010. A total 14 reported shootings occurred within that geographical region of Colorado Springs, Colorado in 2010, as reported in Figure 20.

![Table](image)

**Figure 20.** Reported shootings in 2010 in PMI geographical neighborhood. Adapted from “Zip Code” SpotCrime, 2012.

Within that mere three-block radius, 17% of all calls to the Colorado Springs Police Department for shootings had occurred. This data supports statements that were made by participants throughout this research project:

> There is a lot of violence that happens around - especially since we’re on the southern part of town.

> Safety. . .You know, it’s like so gloomy down here {laughter}, you know, and there’s no phone and I’ve thought of it.
Concealed Weapons

My interview with the office manager led me to inquire whether PMI had a concealed weapons policy. Foley indicated that to her knowledge, no such policy existed. After reviewing the orientation packet on policies and procedures for PMI students, I validated that no mention was made of a concealed weapon policy, or at least one that is provided to students. The lack of communicating any concealed weapon policy is another factor that lends itself to more questions around safety. As a private institution, Pima has the authority to decide whether or not to allow concealed weapons on its campuses. No signs regarding the policy are posted at the main entrance to the Colorado Springs campus; one might assume that weapons are allowed.

Preliminary Questionnaire

Initially, the goal of this study was to better understand what provokes student bystanders to act in school violence shooting incidents or events. The preliminary questionnaire provided me with an opportunity to obtain basic identity information, an “embodiment of personal character” (Ree, 2000, p. 16). I believe that the individuality of each participant has a special significance in the decisions that they make. As the researcher, I needed a better insight into their identities to best respond to both their words and their physical presence.

The recruitment process of postsecondary students in the Western region of the United States to participate in the study through an online preliminary questionnaire began on June 23, 2011. As noted previously, I initially recruited from the western region of Students for Concealed Carry on Campus, from Colorado State University, the University of Denver, and Pima Medical Institute. With a goal of collecting 25 to 40
preliminary questionnaires, the recruitment period was concluded on August 5, 2011. In total, only one campus expressed interest in participating in the preliminary questionnaire, Pima Medical Institute. As 47 students were invited formally to participate in the preliminary questionnaire, at the end of the recruitment period, 39 participants followed through, all from Pima Medical Institute. Among the 446 actively enrolled students at the Pima Medical Institute Colorado Springs, Colorado, campus—8.7% participated in this research study. The demographics of the participants are identified in Figure 21 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Weapon Knowledge</th>
<th>Violent Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21. Participant Overview

**Part I: Affiliation, Kinship, Status, Selfdom, and Inviolability**

“Having a voice is retrospective as well as perspective, and entails looking backwards as well as forwards to achieve self-understanding and self-acceptance” (Ree, 2000, p. 42). To connect a student with the power of her or his own voice in my research, I exercised ten questions within the preliminary questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire instructed participants to provide their name and e-mail address. Additionally, this section asked participants to identify their postsecondary institution affiliations. The affiliations were categorized by (a) name of college/university currently
attending, (b) degree/concentration, and (c) organizational memberships. All participants (100%) were associated with Pima Medical Institute. The largest group (36%) was enrolled in the Medical Assisting (MA) certificate program. Only 10.3% of the participants declared an organizational membership (e.g., Disabled Veterans Association, Sierra Club, and Colorado State University-Pueblo tutor), thus, organizational memberships were not included in the data shown in Figure 22.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Assistant</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Assistant</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Assistant</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Technician</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Identified</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 22. Participant Program Concentration*

Additionally, within the first part of the questionnaire, I asked participants to share demographic information to illustrate their identities, their overall selfdom. Identifiers included age, gender, race, primary language, religious/spiritual affiliation, political party affiliation, and weapon knowledge. This information helped me to discern not only a participant’s kinship, but their singularity as well. I assumed that participant individuality would create a variance in their recommended actions. I assumed that participants would make their actions known through their individualities. As discussed by Batchelor (2008), I gave value to the interpretation of hearing a voice.
Identifiers

The age range of questionnaire participants was 18 to 50, with an average age of 24. A majority of questionnaire participants (85%) described their gender identity as female. A majority of questionnaire participants identified their racial identity as White (62%), smaller percentages of participants identified as Black (10%) and Hispanic (8%). Singular responses included Mexican, Asian, and Pacific Islander. A small percentage of participants (8%) provided no response.

The majority (97%) of participants indicated their primary language was English. One participant (3%) identified Spanish as his or her primary language.

The majority (33%) of participants indicated they had no religious/spiritual affiliation by stating “none” on the questionnaire. Additionally, smaller percentages of participants identified as Christian (23%) and Catholic (15%). Many singular responses (totaling 23% of participants) showed the diversity found among participants: Greek Orthodox, Christian Spiritist, Baptist, Pentecostal, Pagan, and more.
Most participants (59%) responded that they had no political party affiliation. Relatively similar percentages of participants identified as Democrat (15.4%) or Republican (18%).
Part II: Cognizance, Expertise, Ignorance, Intimacy, and Wisdom of Weapons

The second section of the questionnaire asked participants to identify their weapon knowledge (See Figure 25).

![Participant Weapon Knowledge Table](image)

**Figure 25. Participant Weapon Knowledge**

This question asked for participants to provide an open-ended response with an opportunity to pronounce what “weapon knowledge” meant to them, but also, what they declared as their own knowledge of weapons. More than 40% of the participants indicated that they had some level of weapon knowledge, but 31% of participants indicated that they had no weapon knowledge. Open-ended responses to weapon knowledge included replies such as *expert, gun range, hunter,* and *safety* as shown in Table 19. Other identifiers ranged from as simple as either “yes” or “no” to as exacting as the type of weapon the participant is familiar with, such as “m16/9mm.”

The study primarily was focused on bystander behavior in a violent school shooting incident, but I felt data on a participant’s weapon knowledge might have influence on their overall perceptions, beliefs, and emotions regarding the hypothetical
situation. Weapons familiarity presented a demographically divergent participant in the research. This type of participation offers a history of experience, training and education, fear, and stress. While I realized that weapons knowledge may impact the overall presumed action of a bystander in a violent school situation, introducing variance within the group would serve an important role in the focus group discussion. Of the percentage of participants who identified as having weapon knowledge, 63% identified as Caucasian, and 87% of participants with weapon knowledge were females with a mean age of 27.

**Part III: Individual, Personal, Reserved Sense of Refuge, Safety, and Security**

The final section of the questionnaire examined participants on a personal level regarding their senses of safety, their reflections on violence, and their understandings of prevention policies and regulations. Individual sense of safety is “personal, familial, and institutional” (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010, p. 33). Various ways were noted in which the participants both reflected upon and described their senses of safety within their postsecondary institution.

**Historical Event**

An overwhelming majority of participants (87%) responded “Columbine” when asked what historical event came to mind when reflecting upon school violence.

The toll at Columbine High—15 dead, including the two attackers, and 24 wounded—was the highest, and the teens’ weaponry was unprecedented. Columbine, as the incident is now known, is the yardstick by which all school shootings will be measured. Ironically, the tragedy occurred as rates of school violence in general and shootings in particular were declining. Statistical realities, however, were swamped by widespread public fears of [violence] (Fuentes, 2011, p. 28-29).

School violence shatters lives and the word Columbine stirs emotions among many (Marsico, 2011). The word has been transformed from a school name into an
event: “It defined the social category of a rampage school shooting” (Newman, as cited in Marsico, 2011, p. 69). Although other school shooting incidents have occurred, Columbine created profound heartbreak by becoming a cultural reference point (Cloud, 2001, p. 33).

Perhaps the abundance of Columbine responses is because the shooting occurred within the participants’ geographical region—the state of Colorado. Prevalence of the response may have been because many of these students were junior high and high school students at the time. Many K-12 institutions charged themselves to revisit their current school safety policies and procedures of which many of the research participants may have been involved.

A significantly smaller percentage of research participants (8%) identified a historical school violence event as Virginia Tech. “In the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy, many universities were confronted with the troubling reality that one person can, in a few brief moments, devastate a college community through an act of targeted violence” (Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010, p. 27).

**Personal Safety**

Participants identified their level of personal safety as a student on their institutional campus as both “very safe” (51%) and “safe” (46%). The difference among the descriptors being that those who selected safe were still aware of their surroundings knowing that a violent incident may potentially occur. In order for this research to be successful I had to identify those factors that participants associated with a better sense of personal safety among their institutional campus. I asked participants to identify any of the following that may apply as such factors:
• presence of campus safety,
• telephones in classrooms,
• facility lighting,
• student identification cards prominently displayed,
• orientation on emergency preparedness, and
• multiple exits/entrances to a classroom.

The largest majority of participants (62%) indicated that multiple exits/entrances
to a classroom provided them with a better sense of personal safety. Presence of campus
safety (54%) and telephones in classrooms (52%) also were identified as significant. The
idea that an institution provide a student orientation session on emergency preparedness
was identified by fewer participants as being a valuable indicator in their sense of
personal safety (28%).

**School Violence Prevention Policies and Regulations**

Participants were asked to identify their knowledge of school violence prevention
policies and regulations within their institution as expressed by the following identifiers:

- *None*: I am not aware of any policies or regulations.
- *Limited*: I just know that policies exist.
- *Significant*: I know about the policies and could define them if asked.

The majority of participants declared their knowledge to be limited (74%) in
scope. This was important to identify before the focus group session because we
discussed knowledge of the campus, policies, and prevention efforts as well as made
suggestions for administration. A small segment of the participants (18%) identified
themselves as having significant knowledge of school violence prevention policies and regulations. This later was identified as inaccurate in that the lack of policy awareness was identified within the focus group sessions.
Chapter Five: Requiem

It is primarily through his voice that a person makes known his inwardness; for he puts into it what he is. (Hegel, 1978, as cited in Batchelor, 2008, p.40)

The Recruitment Process

A total 39 participants completed the online preliminary questionnaire. Each participant received a general communication from me that I e-mailed to their instructors, thanking them for their participation and inviting them to continue their participation through more in-depth research activities (focus groups, individual interviews). Each participant self-selected to participate in additional research activities to extend my knowledge and understanding of bystander action during an incident of school violence. The participants within focus group phase I were comprised of six males and 33 females. The age range was from 18 to 50 years old. A total 24 participants identified as White, four identified as Black, three identified as Hispanic, and smaller numbers as Mexican, Asian, Pacific Islander, and “no response”. The preliminary questionnaire provided me with an opportunity to gain a better understanding my research participants. I obtained insight about what violence meant to them, personal experiences, and their overall sense of security among their higher education institution.

Syndicate One, the First Session

In Focus Group Session 1, the goal was to discuss research questions in the broadest sense. I had an initial recruitment goal of three separate groups of 5 to 10
participants. I met, as well as exceeded, my initial recruitment goal. Each of the participants that completed the preliminary questionnaire followed through with focus group session 1. Overall, there were three different groups: group 1 (12 participants), group 2 (18 participants) and group 3 (9 participants).

Table 8.

*Focus Group Phase 1 Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic category</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
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<th>%</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>23-29 years old</td>
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<td>41-50 years old</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Parley One: Three Groups*

Focus group session 1 consisted of three different participant groups, separated by their enrollment class day(s)/time(s). All 39 participants who completed the preliminary online questionnaire participated in the first focus group session. The majority (46%) of
participants were in group 2, with a smaller percentage (31%) in group 1 and (23%) in group 3. Each of the participant groups within focus group session 1 were from the Pima Medical Institute (PMI) Colorado Springs, Colorado campus. In the remainder of this chapter, details are provided about each participant focus group through poetic text (Butler, 1998; Glesne, 1997; Mears, 2005) in participants’ words that they expressed during our sessions together. “Stories [are created] to explain and justify life experiences—it is the way [that we] understand [our] own lives and best understand the lives of others” (Richardson, 1995, p. 209-10). To reflect on our discussions and begin to map out concepts about a particular domain, I must first re-create the lived experience of the group. Each of the three focus groups is introduced by a pseudonym that I choose for them, sharing their experience as one unified emotional response. Each poetic text provided throughout this chapter was used in the data analysis process was used as a story from which I could begin to generate a cognitive map.

**Group One: Allies, Altruists, and Defenders**

On July 11, 2011, I conducted my first focus group session with an afternoon class at Pima Medical Institute (PMI) of 12 participants. The majority (92%) were female, ranging in age from 19 to 45 years old. Some participants (25%) indicated that they had knowledge of weapons while a much larger percentage (58%) of this group indicated that they personally had experienced a violent incident, yet remained comfortable discussing the hypothetical scenario that I had provided. Overall, the group expressed sincerity, generosity, and the need to help others.

For me I don’t even think about things like that. I usually, like, get involved. I think about the person next to me. Like, for instance, in this scenario it talks about the person next to you crying uncontrollably and drawing attention to
herself. I would feel like that’s someone’s child, someone’s daughter, someone to somebody and /I need to do whatever I can to try and help this person not to draw attention to themselves or think of some way to help (Participant, July 14, 2011).

Protecting and helping others is a common theme among this participant group, as stated by several other participants:

I always felt like there’s children around, there’s other people around and stop whatever’s going on so that all of these people around don’t see whatever might happen or hear the words of violence or whatever that may happen. So, that’s the way that I usually respond to situations (Participant, July 14, 2011).

But I would help the other people (Participant, July 14, 2011).

You have to get involved, you can’t just let it happen. You can’t be one of the ones that walk away” (Participant, July 14, 2011).

As I wrote in my research journal during this time period I stated the following:

The overall semblance of this focus group led me to reflect upon the Virginia Polytechnic Institute professor, Liviu Librescu (engineering professor and Holocaust survivor), “[who reportedly] barricaded the door to his classroom long enough for [students] to jump to safety from the upper-story windows of Norris Hall” (Washington Post, 2007, para. 1). This fortitude behavior is notable, unusual, and truly heroic.

She said “and I know I’ve always thought about it” (Participant, July 14, 2011). What has she thought about? This comment during my first focus group session has led me to question those who perform heroic acts. Have they already made the decision that should an incident ever arise where they have an opportunity to be heroic—they would? I consider Librescu, a man who endured so much in his life, yet willing to sacrifice for others. Is that predilection or choice? (Researcher Journal, July 2011).

This focus group can best be illustrated through the following poetic text:

For me I don’t even think about things like that. I usually, like, get involved. I think about the person next to me.
I’d feel more comfortable to talk to the person to try and defuse the situation possibly because he wasn’t angry with me but, per se, the situation or the person that he actually has already assaulted.

Like, if I was in the situation, like, I might choose to say, you know, ‘I feel the same way as you do. How about we try to work on it together?’

I kind of feel like he needs me to or she needs me to, you know, and try to go from there maybe.

Just like so that they had kind of like a covert.

**Group Two: Skill, Finesse, and Deftness**

On July 15, 2011, I conducted my second focus group session with a morning class at the Pima Medical Institute Colorado Springs, Colorado campus with 18 participants. The majority (73%) were female, ranging in age from 18 to 41 years old. A significant percentage of the participants (44%) indicated that they had knowledge of weapons while the same percentage (44%) of this group indicated that they personally had experienced a violent incident, yet remained comfortable discussing the hypothetical scenario that I had provided. Overall, the group expressed wisdom, judgment, and proficiency:

He has three different weapons, he’s probably not trying to reload. Okay, so he shoots off probably, what, 12, 13 rounds out of his pistol and the only thing he has to do is reload or drop it and grab another weapon, you know.

If you’re that close to him, he’s already opened fire, you might as well go ahead and try and do something because you’re going to get shot anyways because you’re right in front of him.
Readiness and forethought is a common theme among members in this participant group:

“People fear coming to school” (Participant, July 15, 2011)

“An opportunity to physically go through the motions” (Participant, July 15, 2011)

“If you pull out a gun, he’s going to be focused on you and then one of us in the back could tackle him or disarm him” (Participant, July 15, 2011)

“The best thing to do is wait until he’s done with that weapon and then try to get to him” (Participant, July 15, 2011)

The overall morale of this focus group led me to reflect on the presence of concealed weapons in our society.

Nearly 70 million Americans own firearms and enjoy their safe and positive uses. Guns provide us with the means to participate in a variety of recreational, competitive and educational pursuits. Nearly 18 million people in this country hunt. Millions more enjoy competition and recreational shooting, gun collecting, and historical reenactment. Guns are tools for personal protection, and they are the elements upon which popular collegiate and Olympic sports are centered. Guns offer American society a vast opportunity for shared experiences - as long as we share the responsibility to learn and diligently apply safe gun handling practices (Colorado Weapons Training, 2005, para. 5).

I considered whether knowledge of guns impedes confidence among bystanders. I also questioned how many students in that focus group were carrying a concealed weapon at the time I met with them. No posted notices show that concealed weapons are not allowed on the premises; it was possible that my interviewees had weapons. After all, as one participant stated, “there is a lot of violence that happens around - especially since we’re on the southern part of town” (Participant, July 21, 2011).

Just yesterday—as I write this dissertation—I watched a CBS news report about the state of Colorado and concealed weapon permits. The statistics provided detailed that El Paso County has the highest number of concealed carry permits in the state of Colorado. I am a resident of El Paso County. Many of the students at
Pima Medical Institute are residents of El Paso County as well. Overall, the county has a population of 627,000 residents and an approximate 20,000 concealed weapon permits (CBS, May 27, 2012). This means that 32% of El Paso County residents have concealed weapon permits. How should this make me feel? Do I feel that my sense of security is at risk? Is this a protection against future threats, or fuel for future threats themselves (Researcher Journal, May 28, 2012)?

This focus group can best be illustrated through the following poetic text:

I’d rather give him just my life to save everybody’s else’s

If I could have done something.

Some people won’t be scared because they’ve been through it already.

If you’re that close to him.

Vocalize it. He knows that he’s scaring you.

You can’t tell anybody what he looked like if you’re dead.

In the moment—you never know the moment.

Intense.

Prepared.

There’s no negotiating with him. You have to do something.

**Group Three: Wariness, Prudence, Regard**

On July 15, 2011, I conducted my third focus group session with an afternoon class at Pima Medical Institute Colorado Springs, Colorado campus with 9 participants. All of the participants (100%) were female, ranging in age from 23-50 years old. A majority of the participants (56%) indicated knowledge of weapons, while again, as with the second focus group, the same majority (56%) indicated that they personally had
experienced a violent incident, within this particular group, those were the same individuals. Overall, the group expressed carefulness, watchfulness, and control.

“Evacuate.”

“If somebody walked in the building and started shooting, I would look for a hiding place.”

“Evacuate the building.”

“Get down and get out.”

“He’s not coming to hurt, he’s coming to kill.”

Compliance and subservience is a common theme among this participant group.

“I know right now that I am not strong enough to overpower pretty must anybody . . . “he’s coming carrying weapons.”

The overall docility of this focus group led me to reflect upon what I would do if I were in this particular hypothetical situation. I reflect upon a line that Nikki Giovanni said in her April 2007 convocation address to Virginia Tech: “We are better than we think we are and not quite what we want to be (p. 8).”

The participant immediately replied—the first thing that commonly comes to her mind is “yourself” (Participant, July 15, 2011). Yourself. Myself. Mother. Wife. Daughter. I identify myself by my family. Would it be selfish to accept that I would do everything that I can to stay alive, in order to watch my children grow up? We are a military family. We choose to sacrifice. As Nikki Giovanni addressed Virginia Tech in April 2007, “no one deserves a tragedy” (para. 6). I would like to think that bravery is in staying alive, whether subservient or not. I would like to believe that bravery is being watchful, cautious, and hesitant (Researcher Journal, August 2011).

This focus group can best be illustrated through the following poetic text:

If we couldn’t get out . . .
I am not strong enough to overpower . . . this guy has got three guns on him.
He’s coming carrying weapons . . . he’s coming to kill.
If we have practiced the steps, [we would] know how to egress the building.
Stuff like that happens here.
Yourself. Myself.
We need to get out.

**Concepts (Themes)**

With the use of in vivo codes, which provide a systematic methodology to
“develop a ‘bottom up’ approach to the derivation of categories from the content of the
data,” I identified five key concepts in the initial focus group sessions (Coffey &
Atkinson, 1996, p. 32). These concepts served as a precursor to understanding what
provokes student bystanders to act in school violence shooting incidents or events by
allowing me to organize data sets (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The five concepts were:

- Violence
- Who is this person, bystander?
- Action versus reaction
- Weapon possession
- Safety or security?

**Violence**

In my opinion, what an individual views as violence directly impacts action in a
school violence shooting incident or event. Many research participants defined violence
with a particular act: “stabbings,” “yelling,” “road rage,” “bullying,” “sexual abuse,”
“intimidation,” “rape,” “hazing,” and “domestic violence.” One participant stated, “it’s probably any act that one human puts to another human that harms them in any way.” No participant referenced a shooting, school shooting, Columbine, or even Virginia Tech. In *The Ripple Effect of Virginia Tech* Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) implied that the omnipresent media coverage of historical school violence shooting incidents, Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois, Columbine, and Red Lake, “exert a powerful impact on the psyche and basic instincts of students” (2008, p. 6). I had anticipated that when I asked “Can you tell me what or how you would define school violence?” that reference would be made to these documented events and yet, none of the participants mentioned any of these events. In a 2010 federal report, Drysdale, Modzeleski, and Simons identified that of the 148 violent incidents within one year among institutions of higher education (IHE), 54% involved firearms. Although such a significant segment of documented school violence shooting incidents involve a shooting of some sort, no mention was made in regards to violence.

During an examination of the online participant questionnaire responses to “what historical event comes to mind when you reflect on the phrase school violence,” something notably different occurred. A significant majority (84%) of participants replied “Columbine.” Analytically, there is a direct association of the word “school” with each of these violent incidents. McCabe and Martin state that “the media is an agent of socialization (p. 7).” This proves to be the situation within these focus group sessions. The study participants prove the point that, when questioned about school shootings, people identify a historical event, like Columbine, rather than a particular action, like shooting. Although a potentially important observation regarding socialization of school
violence, another potential factor remains: was it not the association of the word “school” with violence, but instead the presence of others within the focus group that made more of an impact? Were participants more confident to reference historical school violence shooting incidents and events silently on paper instead of vocally in front of others?

**Who is this Person, Bystander?**

When asked “What do most people do when they witness a violent incident?” a majority of focus group participants responded with phrases such as, “sit and watch it,” “keep walking,” and [think] “someone else will take care of it.” Other participants reflected on the fact that the majority of bystanders do nothing at all “because you don’t know what else to do,” or “if there was more people you would feel more comfortable because then you would feel like more people would go with you.” During our focus group discussions, participants began to label societal roles as a bystander. In conversation, the bystander became “someone’s child,” “someone’s daughter,” “a manager,” “a friend.” By assigning a label to the bystander he or she was identified as a person.

I noticed that as a hypothetical bystander became a societal role of some sort, then participants felt that they could no longer “just let it [violent incident] happen.” A participant commented, “you can’t be one of the ones that walk away.”

**Action Versus Reaction**

Following our reading of each hypothetical situation, I asked participants “how would you respond in this particular incident?” The majority of participants indicated reacting to the incident—recognizing that they were not in control of the situation. Those hypothetical reactions included: “hit the floor,” “get under the table,” “evacuate,”
“evacuate the building,” “cover,” “shelter,” “just stay calm, stay quiet, stay under your desk, try to get help,” “look for a hiding place,” and “get down and get out.”

Clearly, when a violent incident occurs, a majority of bystanders believe that the perpetrator is in control and they should merely focus on their own well-being and survival. One participant stated, “I say survival is key because you can’t save anybody if you’re dead, you can’t tell anybody what he looked like if you’re dead.” Another participant commented that, “each person should take their own protection . . . maybe like worry about themselves and then do whatever was needed.” Based on these focus group sessions, it is evident that when faced with a school violence shooting incident or event, a bystander reacts because they place reproach on the perpetrator.

Another participant stated, “do not get involved. Do not do it. Just protect yourself and make sure the people around you are safe and- but don’t get involved, don’t confront the person, don’t get involved with the situation.” These participants viewed themselves as individuals. Hypothetically, if faced with this situation, they would accept control and purposely choose to react in the best way that they could to protect themselves.

A smaller segment of participants chose to act following the violence incident. They believed that by regaining control, they could silence the situation, putting their fears to rest. One participant spoke of his actions to make an action plan known: “We’re going to turn off the lights, we’re going to lock the doors, we’re going to get down and stay away from windows and doors.” Another commented, “you have to do something: either stay low, try to escape, or attack him; one of the three.”
Weapon Possession

The type of weapon seemed to have an impact on each hypothetical reaction. Comments included, “shotguns aren’t accurate at long distances,” “some are more powerful than others,” and “[if] you get shot with a .22—you can live.” Weapon knowledge definitely played a role in the focus group discussions. Those participants with knowledge appeared more confident in their hypothetical reaction, less fearful of the situation, and more prepared with a plan.

Additionally, participants were keenly aware of both the hypothetical shooter and their choice of weapon(s). One participant stated, “if he has three different weapons, he’s probably not trying to reload. Okay, so he shoots off probably, what, 12, 13 rounds out of his pistol and the only thing he has to do is reload or drop it and grab another weapon.” Participants seemed to be more likely to consider intervening if the perpetrator had only one weapon, if the weapon was less powerful, or if a lesser chance of accuracy in shooting was apparent.

Those who were less knowledgeable of weapons presented the fact that perpetrator had a weapon at all as reason to not attempt to intervene for fear that they may become a victim. They recognized that some were trained for these types of situations, and they could perhaps intervene and then would escape to get help.

Safety or Security?

Is there a difference between safety and security? Participants used both terms during the focus group session—which led me to consider the differences among them and their overall impact on each participant and the hypothetical violent situation. Safety and security hold two different meanings:
• Safety is protection against random incidents; and

• Security is protection against intended incidents (Albrechtsen, 2003).

Albrechtsen (2003) denoted that safety is merely protection against hazards. Instead, security provides us with protection against threats. Upon reviewing the focus group transcripts, I realized that while participants wanted to be protected (safety) they also longed for an environment in which they are free from danger (security). “It would make a lot more people comfortable” (Participant, July 21, 2011). It is apparent that participants would like to have security measures in place: “surveillance cameras,” “intercom system,” “maybe a barcode or something on it [ID badges],” “enter at the front desk.” Each of the named security measures does not currently exist on the Pima Medical Institute, Colorado Springs, Colorado campus.

The participants additionally offered recommendations on how they could be better prepared as students on that particular campus. Comments included: “practice the steps,” “have drills,” “how to do and what to do cases,” “with that hands-on practice you get it stuck in your mind.” Many participants indicated that having a plan in place, practicing for a violent situation, and learning what is expected of them on the campus “would be helpful” (Participant, July 15, 2011).

I chose to employ the eminent concepts that emerged during the focus group sessions as an outline of areas of importance that may be reiterated during individual interviews. Each concept became a node, that is, what I believed would be an interconnection between the focus groups and the voices of those individuals interviewed. In the next section, the four participants who shared their perceptions, interpretations,
presumptions, characterizations and thoughts on what provokes student bystanders to act in school violence shooting incidents or events will be introduced.

Parley Two: Four Voices

The goal of the individual interview was to revisit the hypothetical vignettes discussed within each participant’s focus group and address questions in more detail in order to obtain variation among each individual experience (Patton, 2002). For the interviews, I had an initial recruitment goal of three to six participants. I met, as well as exceeded, my initial recruitment goal with four individual interviews noted in Figure 26 below.

<table>
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<th>Pseudonym</th>
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<td>30</td>
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</table>

Figure 26. Interview Participant Demographics

Each interview participant was from the Pima Medical Institute (PMI) Colorado Springs, Colorado campus. Overall, all of the interview participants were female (100%), likely due to the majority female (89%) overall student population at PMI (K. Foley personal communication, 2011). Additionally, the majority (50%) of the interview participants self-identified as White, while 25% of the participants identified as Black and Asian. The average age of the interview participants was 34. Although 40% of the preliminary questionnaire participants identified as having some weapon knowledge, a
similar majority (50%) of individual interview participants identified weapon knowledge as well. These statistics reaffirm that those individuals who chose to participate in the interview session were a strong probability sampling of the study participants. “The best sampling is probability sampling, because it increases the likelihood of obtaining samples that are representative of the population” (Sommer, n.d., p. 1).

In the remainder of this chapter, I will share the voice of each individual participant in their own language to establish a further level of complexity within those concepts identified in the focus group sessions. I conducted a more detailed analysis by identifying in vivo codes of each individual interview participant within each concept. The voices of these four individuals reflect upon their experience within each concept; creating their collective story, which I later share. This process allowed me an opportunity to reorder the data “in accordance with preliminary ideas [concepts]” along with providing the best opportunity to examine the data and establish segmented concepts or subcategories as shown in Figure 27 (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 35).

*Figure 27. Individual interview concept analysis.*
As with the focus groups, I will introduce each of the four interview participants by utilizing a pseudonym that I choose for them in order to best share their experience.

**Amy—A Hero Less a Heroic World**

I had the pleasure of interviewing Amy on July 26, 2011. She is a 50 year old, White female with experience using weapons and her own personal violent experience. She identifies herself as “white,” “female,” “mature,” “mother,” “wife,” “student,” “experienced,” and “military brat.” She was raised in an Air Force household as a child, and then joined the military herself later in life. Now a retired service member, Amy presents herself as keenly aware of her surroundings. “I have always been very aware of my surroundings. I don’t go the same way every day, I change my route up.” She appears confident and knowing in statements made including: “I don’t hesitate,” and “I keep my eyes and ears open.” After our interview, I would describe her as an anticipator. She is ready, prepared, and will take the risk as she stated, “without compromising my own situation I would definitely render assistance.” Perhaps this is what drew her into the military years ago or perhaps this is the outcome of years spent serving in the military. Her interview led me to reflect upon heroism in my research journal.

Betty Deramus stated that “a hero is simply someone who rises above his or her own human weakness, for an hour, a day, a year, to do something stirring (n.d.).” I just began following a blogger, Matt Langdon, who composes a blog titled “The Hero Handbook.” A few days prior to my interview with Amy, he posted “The Hero is Prepared” (Langdon, 2011). In this particular blog entry, he writes about his need to consistently prepare himself for a particular situation, planning in advance how he would react. “Planning ahead is how you can fight through all of the factors that hold you back when someone needs a hero” (Langdon, 2011, para. 7). In our interview, Amy stated “no one expects everyone to be a hero.” I reflected on her anticipation for a violent situation. She commented that in order to plan the event of a violent attack, “be aware.” She raised a good question in my mind—if we as a society don’t expect everyone to be a hero, then what should
we expect of a bystander? Langdon’s blog noted the phrase “reaction hero.” Could there be a reaction bystander (Researcher Journal, August, 2011)?

I can best share the story of Amy through the following poetic text:

Render assistance

No one expects us to be heroes.

But I don’t hesitate.

Protect the gift of your intuition

Be accountable.

Be responsible.

Be aware.

Utilize who I am [and] have always been.

Without compromise.

I recall the story of the middle school math teacher, Dr. David Benke, who was identified as a hero after he charged a gunman at the school he worked at and knocked him to the ground. In a news interview, Benke commented, “I noticed he was working a bolt-action rifle. I realized I had time to get him before he could chamber another round” (Riccardi, 2010, p. 9). After he tackled the shooter to the ground, it was noted that the Assistant Principal then ran up and pulled the gun away. The principal, Beck Brown, stated “that she too, didn’t hesitate” (Riccardi, 2010, p. 9). Without hesitation, bystanders react, and prevent a violent incident. Perhaps here too is an example of a hero prepared (Researcher Journal, August, 2011).

Emily—Shines Up Nicely

I met Emily for an interview on August 12, 2011. She is a 23 year old, Asian female with experience using weapons and has experienced a violent incident herself. Emily identified herself as a “mother” and “military.” She shared that she was a victim of bullying. While Emily appeared Filipino in appearance, she did not speak the
language and spent time with Caucasian and Hispanic students, making her as she stated—"nothing like us." After this experience she was glad to move with her family. Emily started over and grew to take her emotional experiences as a learning opportunity-to act. "If anything happened, I will probably be the one doing what I can." Because of the research she has become more aware, not only of her surroundings, but more aware of what security measures are lacking at her institution. She calls for security measures to be improved, "so if something was happening, like, I’ll know what to do and I’ll be able to help other people if I can."

I can best share the story of Emily through the following poetic text:

I remember that one very well
I was a victim of bullying

An emotional thing

More heartbreaking because some of them were [my] friends in elementary school

They looked at me different

She’s nothing like us—that kind of hurt. It made me angry.

It hurts all in different ways.

I was able to start over.

I feel safe, but to a point—things can happen.

Something that I experienced during this particular interview led me to reflect on the Columbine Massacre. It was recognizing the challenges of being a social outcast and also organizing school acts of remembrance. I recalled an article written by the mother of Dylan Klebold. The article was titled "I will never know why" (Klebold, 2009). The reason that my interview with Emily led me to remember this article was the story of Dylan Klebold. His mother wrote—"His adolescence was less joyful than his childhood. As he grew, he became extremely
shy and uncomfortable when he was the center of attention, and would hide or act silly if we tried to take his picture. By junior high it was evident that he no longer liked school; worse, his passion for learning was gone” (Klebold, 2009, p. 3). Emily was there—she knew alienation. She stated, “it was kind of hard . . . they pointed me out . . . picked on me. So I was glad to actually move” (Interview, August 12, 2011). Each time I asked her to reflect on violence, how to define it, what classified as acts of, and so on she stated “emotional.” She had been a social outcast similar to that of Dylan Klebold. Yet she recognized it, confronted it and took the opportunity to move on. Instead of killing random people, she sat down with me and talked about how to save herself and others should someone else decide to be violent.

The story of Emily impacted me as a researcher because her words offer an opportunity to better understand the common personal struggle of the perpetrator (as in Columbine and Virginia Tech). Emily, knowledgeable of this struggle, a student in California at the time, chose to organize celebrative acts—“I remember just having, like, a little area and putting flowers and cards and writing notes on it” (Interview, August 12, 2011). A piece of me believes that she was driven to create a dedicatory initiative as a reflection of understanding the perpetrators—social vagrants. However, I ask myself whether or not the dedicatory initiative may also have served to rejoice that she was no longer socially displaced, and that she survived (Researcher Journal, September 2011).

**Jeanine—A Little Bit Stronger**

I interviewed Jeanine on July 15, 2011. She is a White female, 22 years old, with no weapon knowledge. Jeanine identified herself as: “mother,” “wife,” “student,” “independent” and “past victim.” She is a very strong-willed, independent woman. Although she initially presented herself as quiet, she opened up to me throughout our interview. In a powerful moment, she chose to share with me that she was raped when she was 15 years old and refuses to find herself in that situation again. Through the eyes of Jeanine, I learned that scared is no way to live. Because of the rape, she defines herself as tougher and approaches the world through the lens of “what can I do to prevent that?” She stated that, “people don’t see things until they happen.” An advocate for change, Jeanine has lived altering experiences and commented that no one should “be
afraid of what’s going to happen when you go to school.” She is a remarkably strong young woman with a passion for becoming something more. “You can’t get a good job unless you have an education.”

I can best share the story of Jeanine through the following poetic text:

I dare anyone

mess with me

[I] try to be as tough as [I] can

Bubble of your experiences

Open your eyes

We judge—too quickly

No two—will be the same

Human and not just evil

You’re not going to mess with me.

Following the Columbine massacre, President Bill Clinton commented, “St. Paul reminds us that we all see things in life darkly” (Fuentes, 2011, p. 34). Jeanine sees nothing darkly—in fact, she brings in light. Intrigued by the comment around St. Paul, I choose to explore more. “We all see things darkly here on earth, but she sees in the full light of day” (I Corinthians 13:12 KJV). My interpretation is that shadows cast darkness on our society. The shadows come from those previous school shootings, earlier loss, historical events of school violence, and so on. Jeanine, a past victim fights to uncover the shadow. Aware that there is true darkness, she still chooses now to be afraid. She is not fearful. (Researcher Journal, May 2012). Photos from the 2012 Candlelight Vigil at Virginia Polytechnic Institute better illustrate a shadow cast.

In Mozart’s Requiem we hear:
Day of wrath, day of anger
Will dissolve the world in ashes (Researcher Journal, April 2012)
Justice- Willing to Initiate Plan C

I interviewed Justice at the Pima Medical Institute, Colorado Springs, Colorado campus on July 21, 2011. She is a 30 year old black female who identifies herself as a “mother,” “student,” “sister,” “daughter,” “friend,” and “support.” She is a calm, quiet individual who expresses great wisdom in preparedness. She shared that her mother always told her “expect the unexpected, prepare for the worst and hope for the best.” She commented that she always keeps that in mind and lives her life proactively instead of reactively. “Mom told me always have plan A through C because sometimes B just doesn’t work.”

Justice presented herself as a relaxed, timid individual. Yet, she offered profound insight into preparation. She reflected on the movie Higher Learning during our interview. The movie provides a powerful realization that most people fail to care for others until tragedy happens, and then they choose to come together. A powerful line from the movie is a quote from Frederick Douglass (n.d.), “without struggle there is no progress.” Justice emphasized that we should all struggle with the idea that a violent shooting incident could happen. “We should all be knowledgeable of it [violence], but they should definitely have more [preventive measures].” If we struggle now we will progress to a more solid plan.

If I were to describe my impression of Justice I would say that she was like a samurai. We all know the warrior samurai—always prepared for death whether his own or someone else’s. “I don’t think—I don’t really feel—I actually feel safe here right now.” She knows what can happen and when and is prepared to address that moment should it arrive. In the meantime, she doesn’t live in fear (Researcher Journal, April 2012).
Through her own words Justice offered me the opportunity to establish a commonsense action plan for a bystander in a school shooting violence incident: “observe what’s going on;” “try to act together;” “put yourself first except if you’re safe enough to take action.” These are simple actions in a thoughtful sequence. “When you do really stop and think about it it’s like, yes it really can happen.”

I can best share the story of Justice through the following poetic text:

Put yourself first
I know anything can happen
When you make a person feel inferior
Expect the unexpected
It could start out like a simple day
But when you do really stop and think about it it’s like, yes it really can happen
Hell could break loose
Think about it before it happens.

**Individual Awareness**

Patton stated “we are typically not conscious that what we perceive to be discretionary judgments are really predictable routines” (1987, p. 31). Each of these four individual voices is just that, an individual voice shaped by biases and stereotypes developed through past experiences. Researchers have found that our individual socialization defines our actions and not so much our instincts (Patton, 1987). During my discussions with each interview participant I hoped to gain a better understand of their autonomic thinking.
It is difficult to be attuned and responsive to the uniqueness of each new situation when our programmed heuristics and scientific paradigms are controlling the analytical process, screening unfamiliar data, anchoring the new situation within the narrow parameters of our past experience. (Patton, 1987, p. 31)

I expect each individual to naturally respond to the hypothetically situation based on their own experience. I challenged them to step outside of the predictable. In doing so, I was able to build upon concepts by way of cognitive mapping.

**Cognitive Mapping**

**Mechanical Data Handling**

I elected not to utilize computer software programs (e.g., ATLAS ti, NVivo) to categorize and compare data during the research process. By choosing to manage and analyze the research data manually with cognitive mapping, I knew potential existed for the process of storing, categorizing, retrieve, and comparing data to be unsystematic (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Therefore, I initiated the use of data summary tables, consistency charts, and analysis tools in order to be practical in both the analysis and synthesis processes—in doing so I was able to maintain more concrete data.

**Language**

Participant language was captured in original form by way of “sensitizing concepts” (Spencer et al., 2003, p. 203; Blumer, 1969). My intention was to explore participant language in a nonhierarchical network form: a collection of nodes attached by links (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This network delineates the analytical process in order to best represent the voice sought to be heard through the research study. Each node is derived from what the participants thematically stated throughout the interview transcripts, such is thematic analysis (Glesne, 2011).
Analysis is about the representation or reconstruction of social phenomena . . . we create accounts of social life and in doing so we construct versions of the social worlds and the social actors that we observe. (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 108)

**Data Analysis**

For this dissertation, I used a cognitive map, which displays a “representation of concepts about a particular domain, showing the relationship among them” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 134). This provided me the opportunity to assemble the data into a format which I then used to generate conclusions and produce actions (Glesne, 2011). Within this research study, this process commenced following focus group phase II; where pre-mapping occurred from descriptive text written by participants and thus providing a skeleton of the data collected. This gave everyone involved the opportunity to confirm that the content was an accurate representation, qualifying as member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). “Participants in this technique are judges by virtue of their expertise in the experience” (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000, p. 91). As I initially collaborated with participants during the analysis phase, we collectively discussed, via e-mail communication, the themes that we were able to identify. This established a framework for the cognitive mapping (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Following the pre-mapping phase, I built out a larger display and entered the data. The identification of evident patterns within the data involves investigating how taxonomies can be grouped together to illustrate meaning (Khattri & Miles, 1993). More simply stated, the data was sorted by either what I deemed as “direct” actions or “primary changes” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 139). This was what is referred to as the *immersion phase* (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). This phase involved the following questions:
1. What do I notice?
2. Why do I notice what I notice?
3. How can I interpret what I notice?

Any patterns derived from this thematic analysis were applied to the overall interpretation, and therefore guided the interpretative process of linking the identified data segments to emergent concepts (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). A relationship was composed as I analytically walked through the cognitive map. “Analysis in the hermeneutic phenomenology approach involves moving from the field text, created by data collection, to a narrative [descriptive] text that is meant to stand along for other readers (Ricoeur, 1981 cited in Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000, p. 76).

While I conducted discrepant case analysis in search of common themes or patterns, I continued to observe the data for any idiosyncrasies. Depending on the depth of the data at times, I had to introduce a separate discussion so that the viewpoint(s) expressed within the data are not lost. Those anomalies which did not fall within the scope of the final synthesis of the data may be used for future research.

In the end, the analytical method of cognitive mapping provided an opportunity to aid in the construction of a new model representing bystander action and school violence prevention strategies. This model, the ARISE Bystander Action Model, is discussed later in this chapter. As indicated by Cohen et al. (2000), “the findings of a hermeneutic phenomenological study can be judged only in the context of the intellectual discourse it joins and creates” (p. 92). The ARISE model I intend to introduce to postsecondary
administrators and policy makers as a tool for developing bystander specific programs and resources (Stueve et al., 2006).

What has practical relevance . . . depends not just, or even primarily, in finding ‘technological’ solutions to discrete problems, but rather in forging new perspectives, new ways of looking at things. (Giddens, 1995, as cited in Glesne, 2011, p. 266)

The cognitive mapping process allowed me as the researcher to best understand the perspective of each interview participant through their thoughts, which when paired together, begin to formulate concepts and relationships. “The concepts we use to organize and order the world are central in determining how we perceive and respond to [situations] we encounter” (Patton, 1987, p. 66). Why a concept? “Concepts channel thought. Concepts order the world, telling us what things go together and what things are distinct from each other” (Patton, 1987, p. 66). I knew that if I wanted to learn how students construe bystander action in school violence shooting incidents then I had to use their concepts to lead me there.

To understand bystander action in a hypothetical situation, the concepts that I identified within my research were used to draw a cognitive map that provided a clear estimate of predicted behavior. As indicated earlier in this chapter, the focus group sessions identified each concept (presented as a node) to be analyzed. Those concepts again were:

- violence,
- who is this person bystander?,
- action vs. reaction,
- weapon possession, and
• safety vs. security.

Each concept is represented by a graphical node which I used to interconnect the data between the focus groups and the individual interviews. The final presentation of the complete rational outcomes followed by each individual stage of the cognitive map is next. This final map (Figure 28 and Appendix G) is the topology of my research question: How do students interpret, presume, and characterize an appropriate bystander response during an incident of school violence? In order to best address this fundamental question I chose to apply the following subquestions to guide my research inquiry:

• What actions or inactions do students recommend?

• What factors (external and/or internal) influence their decision?

Figure 28. Cognitive map on topology of research question.
**Concept A: Violence**

The concept *violence*—is shown in the orange color within the segment of the cognitive map shown in Figure 28.

**Concept B: Who is this Person Bystander?**

The concept *Who is this Person Bystander?*—is shown in the purple color within the segment of the cognitive map shown in Figure 28.

**Concept C: Action vs. Reaction**

The concept *Action vs. Reaction*—is captured in the gray color within the segment of the cognitive map shown in Figure 28.

**Concept D: Weapon Possession**

The concept *Weapon Possession*—is captured in the gold color within the segment of the cognitive map shown in Figure 28.

**Concept E: Safety vs. Security**

The concept *Safety vs. Security*—is captured in the blue color within the segment of the cognitive map shown in Figure 28.

**Summary of Cognitive Map**

Upon review of the above cognitive map I am able to state the following equation: Bystander action in a school violence shooting incident is anchored by concepts A, B, C, D, and E. Given a cognitive map, the individual can formulate the basis for a strategy of environmental behavior. With the cognitive map shown previously, I was able to strategize a model for prescriptive bystander action and expectations during a violent school incident. As indicated earlier in this dissertation, this model has the potential use as a framework for administrators in improving overall school violence prevention efforts.
within and among postsecondary institutions. In the next chapter, I will outline both my suggested model and a proposed implementation plan. I postulated that “the cognitive map would serve as the basis for implementing any strategy” such as my recommended action (Downs & Stea, 2005, p. 10).
Chapter Six: Seeing What We Are Prepared to See

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has. -Margaret Mead

This dissertation set out to examine bystander action during incidents of school shooting violence. In particular, I used the information obtained as to how student bystanders interpret, presume, and characterize appropriate responses to model a framework for postsecondary administrators to improve overall school violence prevention efforts within and among their institutions. In this final dissertation chapter, I will review the research contributions of this dissertation, as well as discuss directions for future research.

The Apotheosis

This research provided a knowledge base which allowed me to create a new model which can serve as a framework for administrators in improving overall school violence prevention efforts within and among postsecondary institutions. Researchers have recognized that “colleges and universities are surrounded by a variety of forces that induce the organization to respond in some way” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 90). In this research, I was interested in those forces, or factors, that influenced a bystander to respond in some way. The bystander model of prevention has become increasingly popular with sexual violence experts, built on the notion that a small number of perpetrators are on a postsecondary campus, but a much larger number of bystanders are there (Gray, 2012). Another example of bystander preparedness among sexual violence
incidents includes the Bystander Intervention Training (BIT) in the United States Air Force. BIT suggests “several intervention strategies bystanders can use when they see, hear or otherwise recognize signs of an inappropriate or unsafe situation” (Colon-Francia, 2012, para. 8). Research has continued to demonstrate the efficacy of the bystander approach as a prevention strategy (Lynch & Fleming, 2005; Neace & Munoz, 2012).

To align with the notion of constructing a postsecondary environment that is as safe as possible given the realities of both the external community and the inability to control the actions of everyone on an institutional campus, I developed a model of bystander action for school violence shooting incidents that prepares for the incident or event, should one occur. Preparation we can control. Nearly three decades ago the American Council on Education leaders recommended that postsecondary institutions should

marshaling those forces within its control so as to provide that its students and employees are able to enjoy on campus at least that average degree of security enjoyed by similar situated citizens of the surrounding community (as cited in Midwestern Higher Education Compact, 2008, p. 1)

**Model Development**

I created a model as a blend of both organizational and social ecological model structures that easily may be tested. The foundation for the model originates from Force Field Analysis developed by Lewin (1951). Force Field Analysis “identifies both driving forces and restraining forces within an organization” (Leadersphere, 2008, p. 4). The driving forces push for change and the restraining forces serve as barriers.

The analysis process as defined by Lewin includes:
1. identify the driving forces
2. identify the restraining forces
3. define end goal (desired direction of the equilibrium)
4. develop a strategy to achieve the goal.

The general goal of this model is to intentionally move to a desirable state of equilibrium by adding driving forces, where important, and eliminating restraining forces, where appropriate. These changes are thought to occur simultaneously within the dynamic organization. (Leadersphere, 2008, p. 5)

The Force Field analysis presents a potential framework for bystander prevention by relying on the change process with social implications built in. In addition to examining existing organizational models, I also reviewed existing social ecological models. The Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Violence Prevention released a list of contributing factors across the social ecological model (Langford, 2010). This is important because the levels identified in the current prevention model represent what research participants in this research study identified as factors influencing their decision to act as a bystander. These illustrate the true interrelatedness of social elements within a postsecondary environment. Just as I identified in my research, multiple factors exist which impact bystander action in a violent shooting incident. If I were to merely focus on one factor, research demonstrates that that would significantly underestimate the effects of other contexts (Klein et al., 1999); therefore, I chose to implement all factors into the model design.

Giddens (1995) stated “what has practical relevance . . . depends not just, or even primarily, in finding ‘technological’ solutions to discrete problems, but rather in forging
new perspectives, new ways of looking at things” (as cited in Glesne, 2011, p. 266). In using a thematic approach, I was able to categorize the forces and consider how each informed our driving forces. The U.S. Office of Justice Programs states “theories of community responsibility and bystander behavior emphasize the importance of a larger community response toward preventing [violence]” (n.d., p. 6). When reviewing the data from this research study, considering all factors (referred to as the “driving factors”) participants weighed as a hypothetical bystander in a violent shooting incident, coupled with those contributing socioecological factors identified by the Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Violence Prevention, I developed the ARISE Bystander Action Model (See Figure 29).

![ARISE Bystander Action Model](image)

**Figure 29.** ARISE Bystander Action Model.

The ARISE model is a graphical representation of a violent shooting incident character (the bystander) which helps us to understand more clearly both what happens in
the mind of a bystander, as well as how we can best prepare for this type of incident/event. Organizational models are used in several ways, particularly when developing violence prevention programs:

1. Models help to enhance our understanding of bystander behavior.
2. Models help to categorize data about bystanders.
4. Models help to provide a common language. (Leadersphere, 2008, p. 3).

The ARISE model addresses those elements referenced above in the following examples. To enhance our understanding of bystander behavior, postsecondary institutions are able to identify those factors which prevent bystanders from taking action (at any level) during a violent shooting incident.

**Intrapersonal.** What holds them back as an individual bystander? From my research, I know that this includes the type of violence, understanding their specific role and expectations, actions and reactions, weapon possession, and security.

**Interpersonal.** Groups, peers, and family have a significant impact on choices (Langford, 2010). From my research, participants often reflected on their families, their children, and that they needed to protect themselves so that they could stay alive. Additionally, we know from earlier research that bystanders are less likely to act when there is a large group of individuals around (Latane & Darley, 1970).

**Institutional.** What does the institution expect of the bystander? In my research efforts, participants repeatedly indicated that they were unsure of what the process was during a shooting incident. Research has indicated that “without clearly defined policies
and procedures that address [roles and responsibilities], it is not surprising that even well-intentioned [bystanders] may fail to [act]” (Stueve et al., 2008, p. 121).

**Community.** Our communities applaud the heroes, the good Samaritans. However, when tragedy strikes, the community is typically the first to ask how such an act of violence could have been prevented and why there wasn’t more done. The focus on the role of the bystander as the “someone who could have played a role in preventing [the incident] has grown significantly in the past decade (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006, p. 44).

**Public policies and societal influences.** Compliance with federal laws and an understanding of both institutional and individual liability is vital for successful prevention efforts (Lowery, 2007). In addition to an awareness of public policy and legal implications, there is also an issue regarding the media and the portrayal of violence as a societal influence on anyone who is in a bystander role. “There are those who suggest that crime fuels media and those who suggest that the media fuels crime” (McCabe & Martin, 2005, p. 38). Regardless, it is suggested that media has an impact on not only the number of more violent acts being committed, but how one chooses to act as a bystander in a violent situation.

To help provide a common language, the ARISE model not only is a graphical representation of what impacts bystander action in postsecondary violent shooting incidents, but also is a strategy for action. ARISE represents the following action plan:
A  
**Awareness**
Recognize that there is a violent shooting incident occurring and that there is an active shooter involved.

R  
**Responsibility**
Assume personal responsibility for the situation.

I  
**Information**
Do you have the knowledge about how to respond and what actions to take in this particular violent situation?

S  
**Safety**
Are you safe enough to respond/act? Never risk your own safety.

E  
**Execution**
Implement the action plan as you can, when you can.

*Figure 30. ARISE Bystander Action Plan*

The ARISE bystander action model structure was expanded from the Step UP! prosocial behavior and bystander intervention program at the University of Arizona (2010). Step UP! aims to “[teach] people about the determinants of prosocial behavior . . . [making] them more aware of why they sometimes don’t help. As a result they are more likely to help in the future” (University of Arizona, 2010, para. 2). The program provides training, which includes an overview of the bystander effect, relevant research, and skills for successful decision making. It has become notably successful for students who encounter situations involving alcohol abuse, eating disorders, discrimination and sexual assault (University of Arizona, 2010). By comparing the Step UP! intervention program to the concepts identified in my research I was able to develop a model action plan for an active shooter on campus. Movement through the model can be defined in three stages as follows.
Stage I: Recognize those factors which may drive a bystander to respond/act in a violent shooting incident. The factor is a critical element in the overall success of the bystander and therefore, without an understanding of each one, no action should be taken.

\[ \text{DRIVING FACTORS} \]

- Awareness
- Responsibility
- Information
- Safety
- Execution

Bystander Action

*Figure 31. Stage I of ARISE model.*

STAGE II: In sync with the driving factors listed, a bystander also may struggle with a multitude of restraining factors limiting their decided action/response. A variety of social ecological levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, and public policy and societal influences can hinder a response, or cause a bystander to hesitate on action. Without reflecting on each of these restraining factors to know what they represent to an individual bystander, he or she cannot succeed.
Figure 32. Stage II of ARISE model.

STAGE III: In the final stage a postsecondary violent shooting incident occurs. However, with the appropriate training on the ARISE bystander action model, an individual can validate each of the driving factors and then acclimate to the incident—meaning that he/she responds physiologically and/or behaviorally to a change in a single environmental factor.
Figure 33. Stage III of ARISE model.

The ARISE bystander action model does not negate other school shooting prevention efforts (i.e. gun policies, role of counseling centers, threat assessment teams, privacy and confidentiality laws). It does however generate a preventive effort by recommending an action plan model for postsecondary institutions. The model (awareness, responsibility, information, safety, and execute) serves as a framework for individual universities to engage drill training efforts, discuss series of events, and so on. For example, once a bystander has confirmed all elements of the action model then the final “execute” may involve something such as “turn off the lights and get underneath the desk.” The overall “sense of vulnerability” loses presence with an action strategy (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008, p. 489). This action model is promising as a violent shooting incident tool for postsecondary institutions, but the conceptualization and definition of the approach is in its infancy and needs further development. “The first step[s] in an
effort to develop and ultimately test the plausibility of a model” is to both query and practice (Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011, p. 76).

**Recommendations**

The first two immediate questions for further exploration of the ARISE bystander action model should include:

1. Does it hold up in a violent shooting incident?
2. Does it need refining?

“Postsecondary institutions [and its members] should be queried to determine their agreement with the proposed action model and for assistance in refining it” (Keller et al., 2011, p. 76). What contributions would they recommend from their perspective and role within and among the institution? Additionally, institutions and researchers should pursue whether or not ARISE applies to a majority of violent shooting incidents. Perhaps this could be effectively examined through more qualitative research involving vignettes. Using known details of rampage postsecondary shooting massacres in the past ten, or even five, years, revisit the situation and query participants as to what factors would impact their actions/responses.

Many researchers have identified that “glaring gaps in prevention, security, and preparedness remain” in regards to postsecondary security and safety (Trump, 2009, p. 26). My intention is that this research would be a contribution to the study of school violence as well as support cautious changes in school security. As evidenced throughout this dissertation, existing bystander literature primarily is descriptive in nature. Only a very small population of researchers had focused their efforts on developing a model to explain bystander action. I believe that the ARISE bystander action model lends an
introductory explanation by contributing to those notable strides made by other researchers in understanding violence and just how to best prevent, interpret, and respond to all threats (Nicoletti et al., 2011). Let this research serve as a reference in all subsequent bystander action research.

**Rara Avis: A Reflection**

On May 14, 2012, I received a text message notification from the University of Denver emergency alert system titled: *Person with gun*. Ironically, it was at that moment, so very early in the morning, that it all became real. The potential exists for a school violence shooting incident on my very own college campus. I am really not protected by a bubble of safety, nor is the university. We are not immune to violence. It was naïve to believe that school violence will not happen to me or to us. My perspective has changed.

There is likely not one among us who has not been influenced in some way, either directly through personal knowledge or an individual from that campus or indirectly by the compelling belief that ‘it could have campus on my campus’ as well. (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008, p. 484)

While this research study emphasizes the realization that each and every postsecondary institution must be prepared for violence, we should not live our days paranoid (Students for Concealed Carry, 2012). Clutching the notion “it won’t happen on my campus” close to us is perhaps one of the few methods we as a society can use in order to live and function on a daily basis (Dungy & Roberts, 2010, p. xvi). Those historically notable incidents of random violence have led the culture of higher education to acclimatize for a crisis. “The stakes are too great either to ignore or minimize the challenge” (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010, p. 29). Michael Clay Smith (1989) advised the
higher education community of their “duty to provide protective measures” (as cited in Brunson, Stang, & Dreessen, 2010, p. 107).

Years ago, it appeared as though knowing would be enough. History illustrates to us the falsity behind this belief. Evidence shows that it will happen, so are our colleges and universities ready? This dissertation has led me to an important realization: mistakes and ignorance have the potential for deadly implications. The loss of life, no matter the scale, generates a rippled effect of evolvement in personal, familial, and institutional suffering (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010). While we often focus on the perpetrator or the victim in violent incidents, we should consider those who are most likely present, represent the largest population, and can influence outcomes—the bystander. Bystanders are usually present and have the potential to play a pivotal role in the outcome of a violent incident (Stueve et al., 2006, p. 119).

The *rara avis*, the rare person or thing, the unimaginable, inconceivable, uncommon thing is real (Merriam-Webster, 2012). Postsecondary environments have been reminded of this with the numerous shooting incidents over the past two decades. We must recognize the importance of “encouraging all members of the college community to commit to supporting safe, free, and open college communities” (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011, p. 338). I know that by focusing on the role of the bystander, we can establish community prevention efforts among the majority of the college populations, because we are more than likely to have bystanders present. Craig and Pepler (1997) identified that in 85% of all bullying episodes, at least one peer was present, and that 50% of those incidents included two or more bystanders present. Assuming that this is translated to violent shooting incidents, we know that statistically...
bystanders are present and that they can impact the overall outcome. There remain limited resources and programs involving the role of a bystander in violent school shootings, perhaps one of the “glaring gaps in prevention, security, and preparedness” that Trump (2009) indicates. Following the completion of my research, I understand that the bystander might change the landscape of postsecondary violence and I am again reassured of the significance of my endeavor.

**The Cost of Academic Freedom**

“Violence on campus, given the storied culture and traditions of the American academy, is likely to be a turning point in the life of the institution” (LaBanc et al., 2010, p. 79). Postsecondary campus shootings have reformed higher education. In earlier times, the university was quintessential to the American learner; “an institution of social harmony built on charitable foundations that works to enhance the intellectual abilities and professional capabilities of all members of a collaborative academic community” (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010, p. 1). We, the learners, entrust our learning and our lives to this academic community. However, during the past ten years postsecondary school shootings have shined a spotlight of national attention on the very freedom our colleges and universities offer.

In the United States today, “apparent random acts of violence are becoming commonplace in America” (Alden & Kaffer, 2010, p. 160). Even more so, the phrase *school shooting* has become too commonplace. For example, San Diego State University, Virginia Tech, and Northern Illinois University are all institutions whose name causes reflection on a grim school shooting that occurred there. Each word, forever bound with the other—mass shootings—tragedies—massacres. Following my
Since 1990, a reported 28 fatal postsecondary violence shooting incidents have ensued. Given the number of postsecondary institutions, these fatal incidents occur on a postsecondary campus at an average rate of 0.0002 per year. While this statistic presents a relatively small risk (comparatively, Britt [2005] states that a person is almost 5 times more likely to die from fire or smoke than from a fatal shooting on campus), researchers have indicated that many more shootings occur on college campuses each year that do not result in fatalities or involve an individual tie to the institution community (i.e., former student, faculty, staff, current student, etc.; Jones, Haley, & Hemphill, 2010, p. 163).

The Virginia Tech Review Panel (2007) reported that an average of 16 shootings occur annually on postsecondary campuses among the United States (as cited by Jones, Haley & Hemphill, 2010, p. 163). Researchers continue to disagree over the severity of risk among postsecondary environments. Greenberg (2007) states that, “campuses remain among the safest places to be in any community” (p. S60). Some may feel that that belief holds true today, and rampage shooting massacres such as those at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University, and Oakland Oikos University do not change that. As emphasized by Applied Risk Management (2008), these massacres “remain very real and the consequences are devastating to victims, families, and to the entire campus
community” (p. 2). Therefore, our colleges and universities must be more than aware, they must be prepared.

The risk of campus rampage can no longer be overlooked (Applied Risk Management, 2008). We, as a society, are faced with distraught students, faculty, and staff, who may choose to arm their emotions with weapons and, when in an instance such as “upset with being expelled” (Oakland Oikos University, April 2, 2012), they may choose to begin “systematically and randomly [shooting] victims” (Dahlgren, 2012, p. 1).

To assess the extent of fatal shooting incidents that occur among higher education environments, I chose to consider student perpetrators alone. Of those 28 fatal postsecondary shooting incidents occurring since 1990, 61% of them (17 of the total incidents) involved a student in the shooter role (as identified in Table 9 below). These results are based on crime data available and are not representative of all postsecondary fatal violence shooting incidents in the United States. However, upon further analysis, a particular upward trend is shown from two incidents per year increasing to three incidents per year. Perhaps the year 2012 might close without more devastation. This pattern is shown in Table 9. According to a report conducted by the U.S Department of Education, the FBI, and the U.S Secret Service (2010) the number of violent crimes associated with college and university communities continues to rise in dramatic disproportion to the rate of crime in general, especially when compared to the rate of reported violent crimes on college campuses in the early to mid-part of the last century. (as cited by VanZandt, 2010, p. 1)
Table 9.

*Fatal Postsecondary School Shooting Incidents Involving Student Shooter*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Date</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Shooter</th>
<th>Injuries/Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2, 2012</td>
<td>Oakland Oikos University</td>
<td>One L. Goh</td>
<td>(Former) student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3, 2010</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic Christian University</td>
<td>Name not released</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 28, 2010</td>
<td>University of Texas-Austin</td>
<td>Colton Tooley</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 10, 2009</td>
<td>Henry Ford Community College</td>
<td>Anthony Powell</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 14, 2008</td>
<td>Northern Illinois University</td>
<td>Steven Kazmierczak</td>
<td>(Former) graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 8, 2008</td>
<td>Louisiana Technical College</td>
<td>Latina Williams</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 21, 2007</td>
<td>Delaware State University</td>
<td>Loyer Braden</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16, 2007</td>
<td>Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University</td>
<td>Seung-Hui Cho</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9, 2003</td>
<td>Case Western Reserve University</td>
<td>Biswanath Halder</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 28, 2002</td>
<td>University of Arizona Nursing College</td>
<td>Robert Flores</td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 16, 2002</td>
<td>Appalachian School of Law</td>
<td>Peter Odighizuwa</td>
<td>(Former) law student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 28, 2000</td>
<td>University of Arkansas at Fayetteville</td>
<td>James Easton Kelly</td>
<td>(Former) graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28, 2000</td>
<td>University of Washington</td>
<td>Jian Chen</td>
<td>Medical Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 15, 1996</td>
<td>San Diego State University</td>
<td>Frederick Davidson</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 26, 1995</td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>Wendell Williamson</td>
<td>(Former) law student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 1992</td>
<td>Simon's Rock College of Bard</td>
<td>Wayne Lo</td>
<td>Undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1, 1991</td>
<td>University of Iowa</td>
<td>Gang Lu</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table reflects violent shooting incidents that occurred on college/university campuses (1990-2012) where the shooter was a current or former student and the incident resulted in death(s).
Postsecondary institutions of all kinds (i.e., career, vocational, 4-year institution, etc.) are under pressure to enhance campus safety. As Flynn and Heitzmann (2008) noted, “the promise of safety and security on campus” has the potential for a shadow of darkness to be cast upon it—by a single gunman.

The Landscape

When asked to reflect on violence on college campuses, most of us remember April 16, 2007, when Seung Hui Cho wrought mayhem on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg, Virginia. With a death toll of 33 people including the gunman, the Virginia Tech Massacre was the deadliest shooting rampage in American history (Hauser & O’Connor, 2007). The massacre horrified many and led even more to question programs and policies that may have prevented such an incident from ever occurring (Drysdale et al., 2010). However, we as Americans are not new to college campus massacres.

On August 1, 1966, a 25-year-old student and former marine seized an observation tower on campus, killing and/or injuring several people on his way up the tower, then randomly fired a rifle at passersby for approximately 96 minutes. He was eventually shot by police. At its conclusion, 13 people were killed and 31 were wounded on the campus (Drysdale et al., 2010, p. 13).

The tally of postsecondary school shooting cases since 1990 have prompted college and university officials to develop new measures to reducing or even eliminating the possibility of future incidents to occur (Sung Hung, Cho, & Lee, 2010). What many imagined would have presented as a stunned or fearful societal response following the aftermath of “the largest single act of violence at an American university” was the opposite. Society allowed the event to fuel an increased passion for using this particular
incident to serve as a benchmark for revised safety measures (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008, p. 479). It is important to recognize that events such as Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University and Oakland Oikos University “[provide] an aperture through which to view ourselves” (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008, p. 489). These incidents have raised challenging issues, among which include: random shootings, weapons policies and regulations, community prevention efforts, and the realistic expectations of safety (Midwestern Higher Education Compact, 2008, p. 27). Let us remember that “safe is a relative concept” (Midwestern Higher Education Compact, 2008, p. 6).

While some may argue that the plausibility of random acts of violence do not necessarily weigh a heavy cloud of gloom upon them, let us consider that according to the Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics (2011), an estimated 21.6 million students were enrolled in higher education degree granting institutions in 2011. Additionally, an estimated 3 million teachers, faculty and staff are associated with the everyday operations among higher education institutions (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011). The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) documented a population of 308,745,538 living in the United States in 2011. Therefore, if, in 2011, an estimated 24.6 million individuals were either enrolled in—or employed by—a higher education institution in the United States, then roughly 12.6% of our population is faced with a dramatic increase in the likelihood that they will experience a violent incident on a college campus. Of those rampage shooting incidents that took place among postsecondary environments through 2008, researchers identified that “over half (57%) of them took place in dorm rooms or apartments, offices, and instructional areas such as classrooms, lecture halls, or laboratories” (Drysdale et al., 2010, p. 14). The potential for
any member of a postsecondary community to experience a violent shooting incident on campus grounds exists—has the community prepared itself?

In terms of managing and reducing threats to people who study, live and work in postsecondary educational institutions, “insufficient attention has been given to the unique needs of this setting and therefore efforts to mitigate threats have been insufficient” (Keller, Hughes, & Hertz, 2011, p. 76).

Dodd (2009) stated:

violence does not simply leave behind an effect; even once the damage has been repaired, the bombed city rebuilt, the communities reconstituted and the traces of the lost all but erased, violence remains as a potent given instability lurking just below a reconstituted façade of normality. (pp. 140-141)

The metaphorical concrete landscape that establishes the higher education environment varies from one institution to the next. Therefore, when we consider violence prevention efforts, we must discuss both violence, as defined by a specific act, and the general characteristics of the environment in which it operates (Wieviorka, 2009).

The conceptualization of [postsecondary] violence must take into account its tangible manifestations, the actors and issues involved, the discourses that refer to it in both public opinion and the media, the policies that attempt to deal with it, the way the law adapts to it, and the ways in which the social sciences approach it. (Wieviorka, 2009, p. 7)

It is important to note that in order to best access the landscape of higher education in regard to violent shooting incidents, we must first consider what has changed, making earlier efforts that may be deemed “unsuitable, inadequate or secondary, so great have been the changes that have taken place . . . in the overall landscape at every level: global, international, social, local and individual” (Wieviorka, 2009, p. 7). The University of Iowa, University of Arizona Nursing College, Virginia
Tech and Northern Illinois University all exist as an era of school violence shooting incidents characterized by the perpetrator. The significant psychological disturbances and a community’s mental health response became the focus of exploration. The landscape became committed to preventing or mitigating such events in the future. For example, following the Virginia Tech massacre, Governor Timothy Kaine established the Virginia Tech Review Panel “to assess the events leading to the shooting and how the incident was handled by the university and public safety agencies. Mental health services and privacy laws were examined” (TriData Division, 2009, p. 5). While we continue to examine the perpetrators we can effectively enter into a new era of prevention, the bystander.

Officials have tried to reduce the odds that a gunman bent on killing could succeed” (Bowman & Martz, 2008, para. 10). As research indicates, we can begin to reduce those odds by acting as a community. The Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated, “we are human because we belong. We are made for community, for togetherness, for family, to exist in a delicate network of interdependence” (as cited in Coloroso, 2003, p. 72). Therefore, let us focus our prevention efforts on that interdependence—let us encourage responsible action on the part of bystanders.

The intention of the current research was to generate new ideas for best practices in postsecondary school violence prevention efforts. In an effort to understand the community, I explored what provokes student bystanders to act in school shooting violent incidents or events. By engaging in the primary research question “How do students interpret, presume, and characterize an appropriate bystander response during an incident of school violence?”, I was able to successfully expand the “framework for thinking
about bystander behavior” by creating a model that represents how postsecondary institutions can address barriers to positive bystander responses (Stueve et al., 2006, p. 123).

We Must Reach Beyond Knowing and Apply Doing

In an article titled Planning for Campus Safety, Desgoff states that “the planning is really practice, and the practice gets your people ready for the extraordinary. You can always be assured that extraordinary things are going to happen” (2009, p. 52). I chose to prepare people in practice at the same postsecondary institution where I conducted my research at Pima Medical Institute, Colorado Springs, Colorado campus. I wanted to provide the faculty and staff with applicable training to initiate their own violent incident drill on their campus. I implemented the ARISE bystander action model training program for postsecondary leaders. “Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do” (Wolfgang von Goethe, as cited in Jones, Haley, & Hemphill, 2010, p. 163). In an effort to engage Pima Medical Institute in addressing the changing demands associated with campus emergency planning and preparedness, I wanted to provide direction. In the wake of tragedy, there have been a myriad of analyses, reviews and reports with a list of recommendations and propositions for higher education institutions “to provide direction and response” (Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008, p. 485). I, in particular, have direction to offer since my research involved the PMI education community on that campus.
Application

In June 2012, I led Colorado Springs, Colorado campus leaders through a training program that I developed, which provided the following categories for application and further consideration.

Define a Violent Incident

As recommended by LaBanc et al. (2010) institutions’ leaders must “define what it is [that they] are anticipating (p. 53). Although conceptual characteristics of crisis, disaster, and emergency could be considered, the current research indicated that institutions would be best suited to abandon this concept and reference the individual act itself, a violent shooting incident. This is the best option given that postsecondary shooting massacres have encompassed most conceptual characteristics of violence. Mass shootings (e.g., at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University) were decisive events that altered the character of each institution; they were unforeseen, sudden, required immediate response, caused great loss, had disastrous proportions, and triggered official declarations of disaster or emergency conditions (LaBanc et al., 2010, p. 53).

Implement the ARISE Bystander Action Model

Teach students the stages involved in the ARISE model: awareness, responsibility, information, safety, and execution. If they are able to move through the stages successfully in a violent incident/event, then the final “execution” stage (as determined by PMI) should follow. Students should continually be provided with expectations, roles, and responsibilities to succeed in an event.
Establish Emergency Preparedness Procedures

Pima Medical Institute is a small institution with a limited number of resources; therefore, having an established emergency plan for a violent shooting incident is critical so that each individual understands and accepts his or her role in preparedness. As they have done with acts of nature, Pima leaders also should identify those “offices, departments, and personnel leveraged in responding to crisis situations” (Brunsen et al., 2010, p. 108). Specific guidelines are to be identified. In addition to establishing best practices among the employees, there should also be a defined step-by-step response for the students. I recommend implementing the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Active Shooter Response Plan (2008).

“An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area, typically through the use of firearms” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008, p. 1). These are unpredictable situations which call for students, staff, and faculty to be both mentally and physically prepared. In a violent shooting incident (active shooter) recognize the situation immediately and determine of the following three best responses based on that moment: (1) Evacuate, (2) Hide Out, and (3) Take Action. Some of the simple steps within each decision could include the following:

- Evacuate
  - Follow a planned escape route
  - Leave behind your belongings
  - Keep your hands visible
- Hide Out

- Evacuate
  - Follow a planned escape route
  - Leave behind your belongings
  - Keep your hands visible
Place yourself out of view from the shooter
Block entry and lock the door
Silence your phone
Take Action
Only if this is a last resort and you are in imminent danger
Attempt to incapacitate the shooter

Another valuable tool includes teaching students what details to obtain when one becomes a bystander in a shooting incident. Homeland Security (2008) suggests the following:

The number of shooters;

Location of the shooter(s);

A physical description of the shooter(s);

The number and type of weapons involved;

The number of potential victim(s) and their location(s); and

Practice.

The New York City Police Department Commissioner recommends that all emergency preparedness plans should include an active shooter drill, or more specifically in relation to this research, a violent shooting incident drill (Kelly, n.d.). A multitude of research has shown that leading participants through scenarios based on actual events and
providing demonstrations involving tips and techniques are more valuable than a mere student orientation overview presentation or literature handout (Colon-Francis, 2012; Kennedy, 2011; Schaffhauser, 2011). Yet, there are those who disagree. James Alan stated that “airlines do not inspire dangerous ideas by reciting crash drills” (2008, p. A64). There is a population of both researchers and mental health professionals who believe that drills and mock scenarios would merely intensify anxiety and fear. Arguably to some, it would not be reasonable to instigate fear (Alan, 2008). Yet, advice has notably little impact if not reinforced. Therefore, “simply placing information on a college or university website is ineffective” (Greenberg, 2007, p. S58).

My recommendation to Pima Medical Institute is that they initiate a practice violent drill at any random time approximately every eight weeks. Students enrolled at this institution matriculate every six weeks and therefore, are likely to engage in a practice drill within a different classroom environment each time. As I discovered in my research, students asked for practice. They indicated that by practicing the action plan for a worst-case scenario, they are more likely to remember their choices should that moment become reality and be more confident in their actions.

**Significance for Higher Education Institutions**

I have provided PMI with enough details to design and implement their own campus emergency procedure for violent shooting incidents. Similar to that of Georgetown’s policy, the purpose should be “to provide the community with an understanding of the threat of an active shooter on campus and how we will respond to the situation” (Georgetown University, 2010, p. 1). Bystanders are a common element among historical school shooting incidents.
The outcome of the current research, the ARISE bystander action model, could be used for insight into factors that encourage or discourage bystanders from action in a shooting incident. Postsecondary leaders might become equipped better to prescribe both how to plan for and how to respond to a violent shooting incident on their campuses. Given a more detailed role with expectations and responsibilities, the bystander may make a decision in a more timely and knowledgeable manner—perhaps with less hesitation. The director of Virginia Tech’s Center for Technology, Security and Policy commented that “two things have to be focused on: one is communication and the second is behavior” (Bowman & Martz, 2008, para. 12). This research has shown that with a more clearly communicated action plan, a bystander is equipped to respond. I hope that educators continue to build from this model and seek opportunities to refine and examine each factor involved in greater detail.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The current study was a limited examination of a small group of postsecondary students from one region of the country and their actions during a hypothetical situation. In addition, the sample was comprised predominantly of women from a private vocational institution whose experiences may differ from those of students at larger public institutions. The hypothetical actions of a predominantly female sample may differ from those of a predominantly male population.

With those limitations noted, the implications for the current study also are limited in two ways: (a) the overall context of the phenomenon and (b) drawing conclusions is not possible. While school violence is “among the issues for which effective prevention policy and practice, informed by empirically based research, are
most sorely needed,” we are limited to studying presumable actions (Samuels, 2000, p. 5). By examining a hypothetical action, I was able to present suggestions for postsecondary community involvement in designing school violence prevention programs and policies. I was unable, however, to guarantee that any of these suggestions would transform into systematic action during a true violent event. I am only able to present a convincing picture of school safety as perceived by students in a hypothetical bystander role.

Secondly, drawing conclusions about the actions or inactions that a bystander may choose during a school violence shooting incident is not possible; however, this research has provided a lens in which to view community preparedness. With an understanding of what potentially may limit a student from acting during a violent shooting incident, institutions’ leaders might address more effectively the limiting factors before an incident occurs.

The ARISE bystander action model introduced in this dissertation is a natural guide to future research. Although the proposed model has a high-level framework for understanding influences on student bystander action coupled with bystanders’ potential actions during a school shooting incident, avenues for future research exist. Future research could be used to address the following questions:

1. How do postsecondary administrators and policymakers view the efficacy of the ARISE model? Would they refine the model in any way?
2. When has the ARISE bystander action model already been used during historical incidents of school shooting violence? If possible, recounting incidents with
bystanders who experienced the rampage may provide details around whether this type of strategy (while undefined at the time) was seen among the action. To add to the body of knowledge involving bystander action in postsecondary shooting violent shooting incidents, individuals who were bystanders in such incidents should be asked to participate (Mears, 2005).

3. What types of postsecondary violent incidents would the ARISE bystander action model apply to? Does this only apply to shooting incidents, or could this be applied to other types of violence? The sample could be expanded to include other forms of violence to ascertain whether the ARISE bystander action model solely is reflective of actions during a school violence shooting incident.

4. Who has implemented the ARISE bystander action model among their postsecondary violence prevention policies? A case study of the model would allow for further analysis of understanding. I suggest that conducting a study from within a postsecondary institution in which ARISE bystander action model was used would produce the most comparable results. Insight could be gained from hearing the voices of those who are part of a postsecondary community who deployed the ARISE model and compare not only perspectives on hypothetical actions, but also test the accuracy of the factors identified in the model.

Conclusion

The implementation of effective violence prevention programs and policies is needed. The evolution of such programs and policies can be achieved only with empirical evidence in which constituencies that may hold different perspectives identify
and define expectations, procedures, and appropriate responses (Stueve et al., 2006). This variance, in perspective, allows an opportunity for all voices to be heard when capturing the breadth of socioeconomic and cultural influences on school violence prevention efforts. This information will provide a multidisciplinary approach to informing new policies and procedures. Wiens and Dempsey (2009) denoted that by slightly altering a bystander’s action and belief, power is removed from aggressors and school violence prevention becomes a more collaborative process.

Invariably, community members will continue to ask, “Why didn’t someone do something to stop it?” (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006, p. 44); however, we cannot ask this question until we have established better policies. Students are placed in difficult positions when they witness school violence as they continue to receive what have been identified as “mixed messages about appropriate bystander behavior” (Wilson-Simmons et al., 2006, p. 56). Despite the recent hype involving postsecondary school violence and the potential dangers of autonomous environments, limited information has been available to guide the development of interventions to involve student bystanders both safely and effectively in the prevention of — or ceasing of — a violent incident. Positive change in school violence prevention cannot succeed only through addressing individual factors. Postsecondary institutions’ leaders must consider how the institutional climate is supportive of bystander action and confirm that students and administrators are in agreement involving appropriate responses.

This dissertation demonstrated that at postsecondary institutions, no matter their location, size, or mission, campus community members should be proactive regarding a campus shooting. Proactive steps may be achieved with an effective comprehensive
campus response that is known to all and best developed to protect lives (Jones, Haley, & Hemphill, 2010). The current research included the origin of new ideas for best practices through the development of the ARISE bystander action model, which was generated from the researcher’s translation of data on how student bystanders interpreted, presumed, and characterized an appropriate bystander response during a school shooting violence incident.

The current research is a contribution to the existing body of knowledge as an examination of socially meaningful dimensions excluded from earlier bystander research (Cherry, 1995). Socioecological factors according to which bystanders restrain from acting in a school violence shooting incident were explored; therefore, an opportunity for institutional leaders to establish best practices within their own communities was introduced in an effort to prepare students for response to violent incidents. In addition, a model is offered that is not another historically broad implementation school safety policy and prevention program such as zero tolerance (Astor et al., 2010). Instead, I have constructed an action model that can be deployed universally among higher education institutions, but also has requirements for individual institutions’ leaders to adapt prevention models to prepare best their own student population. This model also provides institutions’ leaders with an opportunity to assess best their own weaknesses as an educational community (regarding the restraining factors identified) and to address the weaknesses in a proactive movement.

The current research, among other research on school violence, has the potential for use to influence prevention efforts among postsecondary institutions. National, state, and local leaders have charged institutional leaders with an examination of existing
prevention efforts. In 2007, Governor Tim Kaine of the Commonwealth of Virginia, appointed a panel to review the evolution of and response to the Virginia Tech massacre. In the report, Kaine stated that, “we must now challenge ourselves to study this report carefully and make changes that will reduce the risk of future violence on our campuses” (2007, p. viii). Beyond reactions, the results of the current study can be used to call for action. Let us not continue to learn in fear. By evolving our prevention efforts, the shadow of shooting violence incidents might be lifted so educational institutions again may be sanctuaries for learning.
References


Bibliography


Glossary

**Constructivism:** a theory of knowledge that believes humans generate meaning and knowledge from their experiences (della Porta & Keating, 2008).

**Crisis of representation:** when a researcher accepts that knowledge obtained regarding social realities is limited, situated within a specific context (Glesne, 2011; Schwantz, 2007).

**Epistemological:** a philosophical assumption that addresses the relationship between the researcher and that being students as interrelated, not independent (Creswell, 2007).

**Ethnomethodology:** a theoretical view which attempts to reveal the subjective nature of human interaction. It has a narrow focus on daily life and on the thoughts and actions of human behavior (Hippen, Yates, & Mason, n.d.).

**Etiology:** a branch of knowledge concerned with causes (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2012).

**Etymology:** the history of a linguistic form (as a word) shown by tracing its development in the earliest occurrence of the word (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2012).

**Focus group:** individuals selected by a researcher to gather and collectively discuss a particular topic (Glesne, 2011).

**Hermeneutics:** the theory and practice of interpretation (Paterson & Higgs, 2005).

**Holistic:** an assumed outlook in research to gain a complete and comprehensive picture of a social group (Fetterman, 1998; cited in Creswell, 2007).

**Idiographic:** internal (Bess & Dee, 2008).

**Key informants:** individuals with whom the researcher begins because they are well informed (Patton, 2002).

**Kinesis:** posture, positions, and movement that serve to communicate in some way (Glesne, 2011, p. 281).

**Narrative analysis:** an exploration of the everyday context in which stories are shared (Glesne, 2011, p. 282).

**Nomothetic:** external (Bess & Dee, 2008).

**Objectivity:** requires that the observer try to be fair, open-minded, evenhanded, dispassionate, neutral, and unbiased (Karmen, 2010).
Ontology: study of categories of things that exist or may exist within a particular domain (Patton, 2002).

Phenomenology: the type of study that describes the meaning of experiences of a particular phenomenon (or topic) for several individuals (Moustakas, 1994).

Pilot study: an abbreviated research project with the purpose of practicing and testing procedures that could be used in full-scale inquiry (Glesne, 2011, p. 282).

Qualitative: an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, and reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994).

Reconditioned hermeneutics: the theory and practice of interpreting behavior (Underhill, 2010.)

Triangulation: combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1978).

Victimization: asymmetrical interpersonal relationship that is abusive, painful, destructive, parasitical, and unfair (Karmen, 2010).

Victimology: scientific study of the physical, emotional, and financial harm people suffer because of illegal activities (Karmen, 2010).

Vignette: stories that provide examples of people and their behaviors on which others can offer comment or opinion (Hazel, 1995).
Appendices
Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a research study that explores bystander action during incidents of school violence. This research is a component of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Higher Education. A preliminary literature review indicates a need for a more finite definition of student bystander action in order to best inform postsecondary prevention efforts. In addition, the depth to which a bystander is considered within a postsecondary environment has yet to be determined.

This online survey is a preliminary survey, which should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. From this data, a subgroup of participants will be solicited to participate in an additional 2 focus group sessions, with the potential for an individual interview session as well. To ensure confidentiality, your name and contact information will be kept separately from the data and should be selected and agree to participate further in the research study you will be assigned a pseudonym.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time.

To be eligible for this study, you must:

► be currently enrolled in a postsecondary institution within a Western region state of the United States (Montana, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and Nevada)

► be at least 18 years or older

Your responses are greatly appreciated. If you meet all the criteria and wish to participate, please access the survey through this link:

-LINK PLACED HERE-
You are encouraged to forward this email to other students who meet study eligibility and may be interested in participating in this research study.

Thank you.
Appendix B: Preliminary Questionnaire Protocol

Preliminary Questionnaire

1. Default Section

1. Please provide your full name.
   This information is confidential and will only be viewed by the researcher.

2. Please provide your email address.
   This information is confidential and will not be shared.

3. Please indicate whether or not you give the researcher permission to contact you for further research.
   - Yes, the researcher may contact me via email.
   - No, I do not wish to be contacted further.

Additional Comments to the Researcher

4. Please provide the following information:
   a. Name of college or university that you currently attend
   b. Degree/concentration
   c. Organizational memberships

5. Provide the following demographic information (you may choose to leave responses blank):
   a. Age
   b. Gender
   c. Race
   d. Primary Language
   e. Religious/spiritual affiliation
   f. Political party affiliation

6. What historical event comes to mind when you reflect on the phrase "school violence?"

7. Please indicate whether or not you have experienced a violent incident.
   - No, I have not experienced a violent incident.
Yes, I have experienced a school violence incident.

Yes, I have experienced a non-school related violent incident.

8. How safe do you feel as a student on your institutional campus?

- Very safe, I am not concerned about potential violent incidents
- Safe, yet still aware of my surroundings knowing that a violent incident may occur
- Unsafe, I have frequent thoughts about fear and security

Level of Personal Safety

Additional Comments

9. Which of the following indicators provide you with a better sense of personal safety on your institutional campus (select all that apply):

- Presence of Campus Safety
- Telephones in Classrooms
- Lighting
- Facility
- Student ID Cards Prominently Displayed
- Orientation on Emergency Preparedness
- Multiple Exits/Entrances to a Classroom

10. What is your knowledge of school violence prevention policies and regulations within your institution?

- None; I am not aware of any policies or regulations.
- Limited; I just know that policies exist.
- Significant; I know about the policies and could define them if asked.

Done

9/3/2010 10:49 AM
Appendix C: Focus Group (Phase I) Protocol

Overview of the research project

I. Describe the nature of the discussion

• school violence prevention efforts
• characters in a school violence incident: victim, aggressor, bystander
• recommendations for postsecondary institutions

II. Discuss focus group rules and expectations

• During our discussion please speak up, only one person should talk at a time, I am tape-recording this session so that I don’t miss any of your comments
• We will be on a first name basis during this discussion, and during my later reports there will only be pseudonyms attached to comments

III. Discuss the types of questions that will be asked

During this discussion we will share opinions regarding action in hypothetical instances involving school violence. There are no right or wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have stated.

IV. Introduce and discuss the informed consent

Any identifying information will be removed from the data presented in the final research project presentation. Participants will be given an opportunity to review their responses prior to its inclusion in the research, should they choose to do so. All participants have the right to ask for any information to be deleted from the transcripts or to withdraw their consent at any time throughout the research process.
V. Participants will initially discuss a series of open-ended questions:
   a. How would you define violence on a college/university campus?
   b. How do bystanders typically respond during a violence incident? Why?
   c. What is your understanding of the expected role of a student bystander?

VI. Participants will be introduced to a series of hypothetical vignettes.

   The researcher will read a vignette aloud to the group and then introduce the questions. This task will be completed for a total of 2-3 vignettes depending on the time.

   Please assume the role of the bystander:
   
   a. How would you respond in this particular incident?
   b. How should you respond in this particular incident?
   c. What factors would alter your presumed response?
   d. What are the advantages and disadvantages of bystander action in this particular incident?
Appendix D: Vignettes

Vignette #1

It is the day of the final examination in pathophysiology—a Wednesday, just following the lunch hour. A total of 52 undergraduate students at the University sit quietly at their desks intensely reading through their examinations. The seats are connected and the lecture hall is tiered, descending down to the front of the classroom. As the students read over each question and ponder an accurate response, their instructor—Dr. Yvonne Thomasson—sits at the front of the lecture hall reading the newspaper. He quietly enters the classroom from the back, walking down the aisle between the desks toward Dr. Thomasson. Suddenly, it happens. He walks directly up to her, “I should be taking this exam too,” he states. He then points a 12-gauge shotgun directly at her head and fires.

*Figure 34.* 12-gauge shotgun.

She immediately falls to the ground. Everyone in the class begins to scream and cower underneath the desks. The shooter quickly spins around and starts to yell at everyone, “I shouldn’t have to take this class again. You all are the favorites. Everyone hates me!” He is pacing around with the weapon in hand. The female student next to you is uncontrollably shaking and crying. She is drawing attention to herself.
Vignette # 2

A student walks into the College of Engineering, a tall red brick building six stories high, and chains the two main entrance doors closed. He then posts a note on a chained door which reads: *if you open this door a bomb will be activated so don’t even try.* He knows this building very well. He is an undergraduate student seeking a civil engineering degree at the University. Next he enters Neegan lecture hall with an Intratec TEC-DC9 attached to a strap and slung over his right shoulder, a 10-shot Hi-Point model 995 carbine rifle on a strap slung over his left shoulder, and holding a Glock 22 pistol.

*Figure 35. Intratec TEC-DC9.*

*Figure 36. Glock 22 Pistol.*

*Figure 37. 10-shot Hi-Point model 995 carbine Rifle.*
He climbs the stairs to the third floor and casually stands in the doorway of the industrial engineering class being held in room 342B. Approximately 70 students are in the classroom, sitting around tables. The student immediately opens fire. The professor at the front of the classroom runs toward the door and attempts to close it on the student while screaming “jump out the window, jump out the window!” The student shoots the professor and pushes his way into the classroom. Immediately students are being shot and wounded, with one male student attempting to break a window to jump out.
Appendix E: Individual Interview Guide Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today for an individual interview. I really enjoyed our focus group discussion and hope that we can explore the notable outcomes of that discussion in more detail so that I can obtain information to best interpret bystander action during incidents of postsecondary school violence.

During your focus group we discussed the following vignette:

INSERT VIGNETTE NUMBER HERE

I have provided you with a written copy of those vignettes should you wish to revisit them. If so, I will give you some time now to read through them. (Time will be allotted should the participant want to read the vignettes again).

Interview Part A:

  a. What was the most important experience that you had during the focus group discussion?
  
  b. Did you have any experiences during that discussion that you would consider to be really important or profound?

Interview Part B:

The participant will be asked a series of open-ended questions including:

  a. Experience/Behavior:

     If I had been involved in that hypothetical scenario what would I have seen you doing? Why?
     
     What past experiences do you believe impact how you would act in that scenario?

  b. Opinion/Values:

     How would you define a bystander?
What do you believe a student bystander should do during a school violence shooting incident?
Why should a student bystander respond that way?
What support mechanisms should a college/university provide to students who act as bystanders?

c. Feelings:
How safe do you feel when you walk across your campus?
What is your view of safety on college/university campuses?
What is your opinion about school violence and bystander expectations?
How does the hypothetical scenario make you feel?

d. Knowledge:
What are the existing policies involving student bystander action on your campus?
What are the penalties for action and/or inaction?
Are you legally obligated to assist during a school violence shooting incident?
How does your institution define school violence?
Does your institution have a school violence prevention program? How would you describe it?

e. Sensory:
When you walk across your campus what do you see?

f. Background:
How do you identify yourself?
How do you define school violence?
What are your recommendations for school violence prevention?

Do you believe that your institution has effective prevention efforts in place?

What else would you like to see done by your institution regarding school violence prevention?
Appendix F: Focus Group (Phase II) Protocol

Participants will be provided with a written copy of the descriptive summary of the research data thus far. The written report will be composed of the key questions that were asked along with the “big ideas” or common themes that have emerged from the discussion (Krueger, 1988, p. 127). The report will be written with a summary description with illustrated quotes followed by interpretation. During this focus group session participants will be asked to reflect on the interpretation in order to better assist in describing the total research study.

Each “descriptive summary” will also be presented on large paper for a group review process. The researcher will introduce the descriptive summary and ask the following:

a. What are your immediate reactions?
b. What do you believe was overlooked?
c. What might have been interpreted incorrectly?
d. Do you feel as though this is representative of our previous discussion? Why or why not?

Following the initial questions participants will then be asked to assist the researcher in extracting a single recommendation from that particular summary. This also will be written on large paper as a working model for final interpretation.

This process will be completed for all descriptive summaries that the researcher brings to the focus group.
Appendix G: Cognitive Map