About the Author: I am a first semester senior at Illinois State University studying Anthropology. This project was done for an Ethnography class that was aimed at teaching the methods and processes of writing an ethnography. The overall focus on the ethnography was the study of the university. I became interested in looking at the emergency phones on the ISU campus when I heard a story about a person who had activated one of the blue lights on campus to no avail. I then realized that I knew almost nothing about the emergency phones on campus.

Keywords: Campus Safety, Emergency Phones, Symbols, Illinois State University, Ant 285, Bessa

Abstract: In this paper, I discuss the results of an ethnographic project about the effectiveness of the emergency telephones (blue lights) at Illinois State University (ISU). Using interviews with four students and the chief of the ISU police and a comparative analysis of university websites. I show that there are very contradicting ideas on the effectiveness of the emergency telephones on the Illinois State campus. Students on campus are largely unaware of the emergency phones and doubt their effectiveness. However, I found very different opinions when interviewing the chief of police. Even though the students felt as if the emergency phones were ineffective they still felt safer by their presence. Based on these preliminary findings, I argue that the emergency phones are not actually effective tools they are instead very effective symbols of safety. Their presence is also a selling point of the university. I recommend that the university, if they wish the emergency phones to be effective tools, should make the student body more aware of the emergency phone and how they work.

Initial Exercises: Assignment #5

In reading the Campus Crime and Security Report of 2007 I was surprised to see the amount of prevention, emergency, and recovery programs that the University has in place. The University has a number of different educational programs on drug and alcohol abuse and self defense (physical and prevention). There are also many different programs for recovery in place. The wording of the document is very supportive and does not imply any fault to the victim, even the coloring (blue and green with black writing) of the document is calming. The document was also very easy to understand and read; it was broken down into many small categories and put in outline form. The crimes that occurred at the University were very specifically documented in the nature of the crime and the location. Instances of sexual assault were
even further described by documenting nature, location, ages of the victim and assailant, approximate time of crime, and the semester that the crime took place. I was also surprised to see the very impressive sounding make up of the university police department, with their Scotland Yard trained Chief of Police and police force made up of many ISU graduates, giving them an inside experience of what goes on at the University.

However, reading this very impressive sounding report of ISU safety I had to wonder what these programs were really like, if they were all they were made out to be, and how effective the ISU police department could really be with a population of about 20,000 people to watch over and protect. I found a link for this report right on the University home page which made me wonder even further as to who the intended audience was. I would guess that this report is mostly aimed at and parents of current and prospective students. Because the University is a business as well as a place for higher education it could cause the makers of the report to talk up the safety programs the university has in place.

Assignment #8

In the Basso text he talks about how the name of and the stories behind places influence how those places are viewed. This means that a single place can be viewed many different ways and mean many different things to different people. Because no one really has the exact same experiences in any place they take on different identities. For example, Schroeder Hall for me is the Anthropology building, this is where all of my classes are and basically where I live during the week, but for someone who is a Physics major after their first couple of years they really don’t even have to think about Schroeder anymore, it may just be the Gen. Ed. building. The university itself takes on many different names and has many different stories for the people that attend, work, or know people that attend there.

Question: Assignment #6

I am interested in studying how the University sells itself as a safe environment and how that idea affects the student involvement in the university. I was inspired by how people talk about safety of the university (i.e. "it's dangerous for girls to go out on the quad at night because that is where people get raped," even though the vast majority of rapes happen in the dorms). Then in turn how this idea of safety affects their involvement in different activities. In order to research this I plan on using a combination of researching different university documents about the ISU police and safety programs and interviews with students and hopefully members of the ISU police.
Assignment #11
I have changed my question completely. Now I would like look at the University's place names in contrast to the variety of place names that the students have for the places on campus. In order to research this I plan on looking at the different stories behind some of the places on campus and how they contribute to how the University talks about itself. Then I would like to interview students to see if their place names and stories for those buildings coincide with the University's and what their opinions are of the University's place names. I would also like to observe how those places are used.

10.22
My question has turned into a combination of my two original questions. I would like to look at the myths and realities of safety at ISU. I would like to see if there are some discrepancies between what students think about safety and what the campus police think.

10.29
I would like to modify my question once again. Now I would like to focus primarily on blue lights on campus. Why blue lights? How they make people feel, safer or more cautious? How did their use come about? If other universities use them and how? How is their placement organized and why?

Plan: Assignment 16

For my interviews I plan on getting in contact with the chief of the ISU police and the woman that Emma suggested to me. I would also like to interview some people that live in Tri Towers to see how they feel about the Main underpass (a "danger place"). I also think I am going to start doing observations in the underpass and the quad on different weekday/weekend nights to see how people use them and if they are in groups or by themselves and what their sex is. I would also like to get a map of the ISU campus just to get a visual of what places are unsafe and safe. I am also interested in looking into the emergency boxes that are located around the campus and map out their locations and frequency. Also, I am not sure if I would be able to do this but, when I talk to the chief of ISU police I wanted to ask him about the efficiency of the boxes and ask him if it would be possible to test them. However, I don't know if this would be a safety issue.

Week of 10.22

On Tuesday I am going to call Chief Swan and schedule an interview, I am also going to take pictures on Tues (I am thinking of taking some pictures of the Blue Lights at night time and different "danger places" on campus). Then on Wed. I have an interview with a student from Tri.

Nov. 5
I have an interview with Chief Swan later on in the week. I want to ask him about some of the history of the blue lights at ISU. I also plan on asking him about the placement of the blue lights and how often they are used. During the week I would also like to look into the University of Illinois e phones and the Wesleyan emergency phones. I will look for the amount of information these websites have on their emergency phones and where this information is available. I will look for a map also, and see how easily accessible the information is.

Nov. 7

I have two more interviews with different students next week. I will ask them about the blue lights on campus, if they have any related stories. I will also ask them about how they feel about them and if they would use them in a case of emergency. I would also like to inform them of some of the things I learned while talking to Chief Swan and see their reactions.

Data: Assignment 20

So far I have pictures of the blue emergency lights on a rainy night. I took this picture just to show what the emergency boxes look like and how bright they are at night. These stations are placed throughout the quad and other places throughout the campus. This picture is important because one part of my research is to question their effectiveness in deterring crime or aiding possible victims of crime. I also would like to inquire about other aspects of the blue lights, such as the reasoning for their placement, how they are placed and why? The reason why I took this picture on a rainy night is because this is the most ominous time of day at night is supposedly when all the crime happens.

Assignment 22


11.5

There are 18 blue lights throughout the campus. I have to go out and find where all of these are to put them on the campus map. Which makes me wonder why there is not a map online showing where all these blue lights are.

Assignment 24

My research has focused mostly around interviews. I've interviewed
current students, alumni, and some police officers. I asked questions focused around how the blue lights make them feel about their safety on the campus and for any personal experiences with the blue lights. I've also looked into how other school implement safety features such as blue lights or even if they use blue lights at all. In looking into how other schools implement blue lights into their campus it seems like Illinois State University may be lacking in a way. Many of the other Universities that I looked at had very extensive information about the blue lights on their website. Many had maps showing where all the blue lights were located on campus including the police approved routes to get from on to the other. They also had the theory behind their use and reasons they were the places they were. When looking on ISU's website they had a very short blurb about them on the Office of International Studies page. All it said about the blue lights was how many there were and how to use them by standing and pressing the button to talk to the University Police, it did not say anything about how to use them if a person is being chased. An interesting thing that I have come across in my interviews is that many of the students feel that the blue lights are worthless and do not really work. In researching the blue lights this overall feeling that the lights do not work is their fundamental flaw because even if they do work when students are in trouble they will not even think to use them. I think this is even more evident on the ISU campus since many of the people I talked to about the blue lights complained of not even knowing where they are on the campus.

Interview 1: (Student)

I met my first interviewee today. In our time at the Coffee Hound we talked about her feelings of safety at the ISU campus. I had only a few formulated questions when I went into the interview. Because I already knew the girl I was interviewing I was not worried about forgetting what I wanted to figure out. My few general questions included: How do you feel about safety at ISU, What do you think about the blue lights on campus, Do you think that you would use the blue lights in a time of emergency. In our interview I found an overall distrust of the blue lights. She said that she would most likely use her cell phone in a time of emergency. She also said that as a safety precaution she normally travels in groups after dark.

Interview 2: (Chief of Police)

I interviewed the Chief of Police in order to find out some of his opinions on the blue lights. In the interview I found out that they were put in place in 1992 and there were originally 18 and there is now actually 26. There was no one occurrence that influenced that administration to put in the
blue lights. He would not tell me how often they were used or the last
time they were used. He would only tell me that they were not used very
often. However, he maintained that they was a good thing because it just
means that the campus is safe. He told me that they were used more
often during the day then at night. He found me a map telling where all
the blue lights were located. I found out that they were tested on a
regular basis and they they were suppossed to be responded to in five
minutes.

Interview 3-5: (Student)

The interviews with the other three students were suprisingly alike. They
all expressed much doubt and in some cases anger. They did not really
know how they worked or who they connected them to.

Discuss:

EUI Links: http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/bitstream/2142/1336/2/stories%2bwe%2bcarry
%2bpaper.pdf

This student's research was about student's ideas of college life and how
they affect their college experience. It was interesting to read because I
did not really consider how things like movies and books could indirectly
affect a person's college experience through a sort of self-fullfilling
prophesy. So, when I am interviewing people about place names I
should take into consideration the different ideas of college life that
person had before coming to college and how that shapes their reactions
to different experiences now. It also made me wonder how portrayals of
college life in movies and books affect different University programs and
how the University sells itself.

http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/bitstream/2142/1311/3/Campus
%20Legends.pdf

This student researched the folklore and myths of the University of
Illinois. Their research was based very heavily on archival research. It
interested me to see how the University tells stories about itself and how
these stories evolve over time. It seems as if stories such as the ones in
this student's research serve as a way to create a commonality amongst
all the students and faculty of the University. For example, almost
everyone at ISU knows about the haunted library, its story is even
included in some of the University tours. This gives a base story for
everyone to have in common. In talking about how the stories evolve over
time it made me think about how buildings and their uses evolve over
time also. Leading me to wonder how up to date the University is on those changes in building use.

**Reflect:** 10.22

As of right now, I feel like I am falling behind in my research, but I am not as worried about it now. I have an interview set up with some students from Tri-towers and I have to call back Chief Swan to schedule an interview. So, I feel like my research, although there is not very much done yet, is starting to come together.

**Recommendations:** I think ISU needs to make a couple changes if it is to successfully implement the blue lights. To start with, an easily accessible map of where the blue lights are on campus would keep people aware of where the police preferred travel routes are on campus. Also, ISU should have more information about the blue lights on their website. This way people would be more aware of blue lights and would not second guess their efficiency. It would also be helpful for ISU to install more blue lights on campus, especially right around the quad.

12.4

I realize that if ISU put up a map of where the blue lights are on campus it probably won't be looked at on a regular basis by students. However, I still think it needs to be done. I also think that, in general, ISU has to make the blue lights more public. For example, the ISU police could start doing public tests on the blue lights. Just little things like that would help the students regain some trust in the blue lights. Even though I do think these things would help to make the blue lights more effective tools, I also think that as symbols they are very effective. I think their presence serves to create a safe feeling for students and they have probably served in deterring crime on more than one occasion.