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Unconcealed perspectives on concealed carry firearms on campus: a case study

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UNCONCEALED PERSPECTIVES ON CONCEALED CARRY FIREARMS ON CAMPUS: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

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The issue of allowing concealed carry firearms at institutions of higher education (IHE) has become of great interest to many in and out of higher education. Those interested include national interest groups, researchers, legislators, and higher education administrators. Opponents of concealed carry claim firearm presence on college campuses is inappropriate, though concealed carry advocates disagree. Empirical data derived from the perspectives of campus constituents' feelings on the issue has been a smaller part of the discussion. Although a handful of studies have been conducted in the last few years inquiring about the perceptions campus constituents' have about concealed carry on campus (CCOC), many of these offer quantitative data. While these data are useful in gaining understanding about general attitudes towards CCOC, there is a need to know why constituents believe a certain way about CCOC. Understanding constituents' (students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners) perspectives regarding CCOC through an in-depth qualitative inquiry may help senior campus administrators and other student affairs practitioners gain insight about how to support these constituents.

Through constructivist case study I uncovered the perspectives of college campus constituents regarding concealed carry firearms at one institution of higher education. Fifteen constituents (four students, six faculty members/instructors, and five student affairs practitioners) participated in the study. Participants were interviewed in a one-on-

one setting. A thorough review of institutional documents also contributed to understanding what constituents think about the issue. Data were analyzed, categorized into themes, and presented in Chapter IV. Themes include constituent rationales regarding CCOC, influences on rationales, and how IHE administrators can help support constituents. Implications for IHE administrators are provided in Chapter V and include having larger campus discussions about the issue, making campus constituents more aware of the parameters and background of the campus policy through trainings, concealed carry permit holder compliance with safety, and providing optional campus-specific trainings for permit holders. Implications for future research include more qualitative case study inquiries at other institutions of higher education.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Student gunman Seung Hui Cho killed 32 people at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech) on April 16, 2007, making it the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history (Hickey De Haven, 2009). Since the Virginia Tech incident, much attention has been given to a proposed response that would help decrease the possibility of these types of events from happening. Specifically, the debate focused on whether or not concealed carry weapons permit holders should be allowed to carry their firearms (i.e. handgun) onto college and university campuses (Bradley, 2009). The debate continues between the two sides of the issue. Both sides are adamant their stance will increase safety on campus.

On one side of the divide, proponents of concealed carry firearms on campus believe in taking action to ensure another potential gunman could not kill with ease. The action involves allowing students, faculty, and staff to arm themselves with concealed carry firearms. This solution is publically supported by national organizations such as Students for Concealed Carry (SCC). This group formed the day after the Virginia Tech campus-shooting incident, and is now made up of more than 36,000 members and spans more than 300 campuses (Giroux, 2008-2009; Kopel, 2009; State-by-state, n.d.). SCC claims the effects of the tragedy could have been minimized or eliminated completely had concealed carry permit holders been allowed to carry their firearms on campus

(Rasmussen & Johnson, 2008). As many states do not allow concealed carry at public institutions of higher education (IHE), the SCC's goal is to extend the gun-carrying rights campus constituents have off campuses, on to campuses as well (McLelland & Frenkil, 2009). The group has brought successful lawsuits against IHE with campus gun bans that they believed violated state law. SCC's website contains statements, arguments, and national studies with evidence supporting their position (Ferner, 2011).

Those who oppose CCOC are at the other end of the spectrum. Prominent leaders in this camp include national groups such as the Brady Campaign, Students for Gun Free Schools (SGFS), and professional organizations associated with higher education. These groups claim a college campus is not the appropriate environment for readily available firearms. They argue that campus environments are places where students experiment with alcohol and drugs (Hickey De Haven, 2009; Siebel, 2008). Mental illness is another significant concern of opponents of concealed carry firearms on college campuses, as they emphasize that rates of mental illness are substantial among traditional age students, and tend to manifest between 18-25 years of age (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2003; Siebel, 2008). For example, mental health played a major role in the Virginia Tech incident, as Cho had significant mental health issues (Hickey De Haven, 2009).

Gun theft and accidental shootings are a concern of opponents of CCOC (Siebel, 2008). They further argue academic freedom is thwarted with the presence of guns (Siebel & Rostron, 2007). Finally, they argue there is no possibility of campuses being able to ensure student safety if more people are carrying firearms. They argue there are tremendous liability implications with the allowance of CCOC (Siebel, 2008).

These oppositional arguments lead the discourse and shape the literature regarding CCOC. These arguments are rationales for whether campus gun-ban policies and state laws should be changed or kept intact. Institutions of higher education and state laws largely prohibit concealed carry firearms on college campuses. However, since the Virginia Tech campus-shooting incident, a push to change legislation allowing CCOC has occurred in many states across the country (Kelderman, 2011; Villahermosa; 2008). While many of the proposed bills were defeated, some states have had recent success. Changes to laws in the last few years now allow those with concealed carry permits to legally carry on twice as many campuses (Wiseman, 2011). Many of these changes to existing law, and even to campus firearm policies, have changed within one year. Colorado, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Mississippi are states that recently changed their laws to allow concealed carry firearms on campus. This recent trend indicates that CCOC is a growing issue for IHE and state governments. The debate no longer lives at the conceptual level. It is now a tangible issue for IHE's administrators.

Statement of the Problem

Keeping students, faculty, and staff safe by preventing or quickly stopping campus-shooting incidents is a top priority for higher education institutions. Colleges currently find themselves at the epicenter of a polarizing debate as they have experienced campus-shooting incidents. Proponents of concealed carry consider it the best answer to minimize the injuries and casualties of an incident, or a way to eliminate them altogether. However, opponents consider allowing firearms on campus a risk to safety of campus constituents.

There is a broad array of opinion as to what will keep our institutions of higher education safe. These arguments are formulated with little input from campus constituents. Specifically, empirical data is minimal regarding the perspectives of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty members and instructors, and student affairs practitioners from a range of support services (e.g. Student Activities, Admissions, Greek Life, Dean of Students Office). While the national organizations are comprised of some of these constituents, they speak as one voice, and with one position. Since past data is largely quantitative, it is important to conduct further studies eliciting qualitative data at the institutional level since national organizations' opinions have occupied most of the debate. Individual perspectives and experiences provide a more in-depth study of the issue. Senior level administrators, such as those in positions of Provost, Dean of Students, General Counsel, Vice President of Student Affairs, as well as other student affairs practitioners need to understand these perspectives to develop plans on how best to support their constituents needs, concerns, and views. A qualitative study on the populations' perspectives, a population which concealed carry firearms on campus most directly impacts, adds voice to an issue, as these perspectives are rarely seen in the empirical literature on the topic of CCOC.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

When trying to plot my journey to make meaning of concealed carry on college campuses, I was led to inquire about the CCOC perspectives of individuals who work and attend class on campus, and how they formulated their particular perspectives. The purpose of this case study was to better understand the perspectives university students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners on CCOC, and in doing so better understand the

rationales they develop for having these perspectives, which can help IHE develop more effective polices and support strategies. I plotted my journey through this process, and co-created meaning with participants through a constructivist paradigmatic framework on this issue. I was also interested to learn about my participant's rationales', and if they were informed by first-hand experiences with individuals who carry concealed weapons. Finally, I was interested in what participants think administrators can do to support their beliefs about CCOC. For the purposes of this study a range of constituents were chosen, in an effort to gather different opinions. The range includes participants who are students, faculty/instructors, and student affairs practitioners. This in-depth empirical study, which elicited qualitative data, indeed uncovered these perspectives.

The following research questions guided this study:

Q1: How do college students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners' perspectives influence how they make meaning of concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ1: What actual experiences have participants had with concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ2: What rationales do participants develop to support their stance for or against concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ3: What influences participants' rationales regarding concealed carry firearms on (CCOC)?

SQ4: How do participants feel university administrators can support their particular perspectives regarding concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

The purpose of the main research question was to better understand what those on campus believe about concealed carry firearms on college campuses. Participants in the study will help answer to the question and give unique perspective of the topic. The sub-research questions are designed to further uncover the participants' perspectives. These

questions ask participants to explain their own experiences with CCOC, their stance on concealed carry firearms on campus, how they developed their stance, and how they believe university administrators can support their perspectives. Through these questions, a more comprehensive understanding of how campus constituents regard concealed carry firearms on campus was realized. An important note, and for the purposes of this study, CCOC was defined as the lawful carry of a firearm (handgun) by individuals possessing a state issued concealed carry weapons permit.

Significance of Study

Arguments are made with little regard to empirical evidence of what campus constituents (i.e. students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners) think about the issue. This is mainly due to the lack of empirical evidence on this issue. The rare studies on what campus constituents believe about the issue are mainly derived from quantitative data, and were a minor focus of larger inquires.

Through the present study I sought to dig deeper and understand the perspectives of those who are most effected by concealed carry firearms on campus; campus constituents. Campus constituents are those who work, live, or attend class on college or university campuses. While campus constituents are represented in the national organizations, making their opinions collectively voiced, it is still important to understand perspectives of everyday students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners on an individual level. These in-depth perspectives have not been heard. Individuals can provide a greater understanding of their experiences through rich dialogue, which qualitative research can uncover.

This study is also significant for addressing ways to deal with the challenges ahead for higher education administrators should they see CCOC be instituted on their campus. Challenges to long-standing concealed carry laws and policies have increased across the country since 2007 with recent changes to state level concealed carry laws and policies in Oregon, Colorado, Mississippi, and Wisconsin. The trend indicates that CCOC has become a significant issue at institutions that have generally prohibited weapons on their campuses. Because this is a growing issue, it is important to understand how those who attend class, live, and work at colleges feel about this issue that directly affects them.

Insight into these perspectives will uncover how meaning is made of concealed carry firearms on a college campus by students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners. This study may help guide higher education administrators in their decisions regarding how to support their constituents' feelings, concerns, and perspectives in relation to CCOC. Campus administrators need to consider these data when developing responses for the campus community.

Researcher Perspective

Constructivist researchers embrace their own views when conducting research on a particular topic with the understanding they contribute to the product of the research (Mertens, 2010). In this section I discuss how I became interested in the topic and how my journey to understand CCOC has evolved. Moreover, how I have wrestled with my views on this topic; and at times finding myself embracing a dissonance, which made me ponder *why* I believed a certain way. This section is an expression of how I have made meaning of concealed carry firearms on college campuses.

My Journey to Make Meaning of Concealed Carry on College Campuses

I first became interested in CCOC during a research course in my higher education doctoral program. Shortly after the semester began Amy Bishop, a faculty member at the University of Alabama at Huntsville, shot and killed three of her colleagues after being denied tenure. As a class we discussed the tragedy and ways similar episodes of campus violence could be prevented. The other event was the implementation of a gun ban policy at an institution that had historically allowed concealed carry. The ban was being challenged and the matter was receiving considerable attention in the media. These two events were intriguing because they evoked deep-seated emotions and were steeped in controversy. After completing the class, I followed the CCOC debate and have had numerous discussions with colleagues, faculty members, and students about this unique subject of concealed carry, and what it means for IHE, as well as constituents at these institutions.

My evolving beliefs. The more I learn about the positions various groups have on the matter of CCOC, the more I realize that my stance has evolved. My original starting point was to oppose concealed carry on campus. I think this position stemmed from my concerns about how some felt the need to carry a weapon around on their person, as if they were constantly waiting for a time to use it. It had little to do with the actual guns…I actually like guns. When I was young I would shoot targets with my friend's .22 rifle on his farm. I also enjoyed shooting clay pigeons with family members, and had the opportunity to use their shotguns. I never wanted to actually hunt, but loved the challenge of hitting a target. I had no experience shooting pistols; however, I did

admire looking at my friend's variety of handguns. Again, I was only interested in guns as a recreational activity and never entertained the idea of carrying one.

As I reflected on my original position of viewing guns only for recreational use and never entertaining the idea of carrying one myself, I have come to understand how this view was overly simplified. I supported my fellow citizen's right to own firearms, as I respected the Second Amendment. However, I did not feel this right necessarily extended to carrying these weapons around on a college campus.

As a graduate student and graduate assistant in a student affairs office, I had even stronger beliefs about CCOC. Guns were not conducive to a college campus, and I could not believe allowing concealed carry firearms on campus was a plausible topic for discussion. From my experiences, colleges are some of the safest places in our country. They are an ideal environment to support freedom of thought, self-discovery, and challenging discourse. Allowing concealed carry firearms here ran counter to these ideals. It felt as though allowing firearms in this environment would restrict other people's ability to foster this ideal and to self-explore or develop.

If any event could have swayed me to believe that CCOC was a good idea, it was the 2007 campus-shooting at Virginia Tech (VT). I remember sitting in my office, then 25 years old, and thinking three things. First, how horrible this was and how the families of those attending class, working, and living on campus must feel, wondering if their loved ones were okay. I certainly was feeling the gravity of the event, as much as many others seeing it unfold on television. The second thought I had was imagining how I would react if something like this was happening to me, or someone I loved. I felt the devastation in my heart. And, my last thought was wondering if in this situation I would

have wished that I were armed and not defenseless. How terrible it must have been to know that there was someone shooting fellow students and be powerless to stop it. I could imagine myself hearing those first guns shots and screams, and wanting to be prepared to defend myself, and others if I could, against an attacker.

Assuming that my thoughts and feelings toward the Virginia Tech shootings are relatively normal, their accumulative effect helped me understand why people on both sides of the CCOC issue are so passionate. While everyone agrees that campus shootings are terrible, there are two diametrically opposed theories for preventing them. My initial reaction to this shooting was finding a solution that would keep mentally ill people from acquiring guns and therefore preventing such incidents. However, from an emotional perspective, I also wanted people to have the opportunity to be armed so they could stop such incidents once they started.

Another experience, which contributed to my evolving perspective on CCOC, occurred a little more than a couple years ago. This event brought me face-to-face with my research topic. At that time, I was taking a break from my research, to concentration on my remaining coursework. This coursework lead me to spending many hours in a research lab in order to complete assignments and avail myself to the support of the lab assistants. Myself, as well as other students from other academic programs made this lab a home away from home.

Towards the end of the semester, another graduate started spending more time in the particular study room I usually used. His reason was to use the phone. I assumed either it was because he did not have a phone, or he did not want to make these sorts of calls from his phone. The tone of these calls was determined, and the volume was loud.

The calls were to lawyers and other authorities regarding an investigation of his recent behavior on campus. I had heard from other students that the student came under investigation when he turned a short story that depicted a graphic school shooting into the school's writing lab asking for critique and suggestions.

At the time, these conversations did not disturb me too much, other than wondering why this person was interested in writing this story, and then why he was interested in turning it into the writing lab. However, I did begin to worry when I heard him talking about his gun collection and how excited he was that he was going to receive a new one in a couple of days. Others in the lab, who seemed to know him, did not appear alarmed by the conversation. They seemed to react as if this was something normal for him. I normally would not mind if others talk about guns and the ones they own. I understand it is a hobby for many people and do not begrudge them that. However, over the next few days he talked about his frustrations more and more, and made more calls, and casually spoke of his guns. He did not speak of them as if he was going to threaten anyone with them, but he just spoke of them.

I was beginning to become more uncomfortable with this situation. And I felt I needed to speak with someone about him. I went to a mentor and I asked the person what I should do. The recommendation was to go to the Dean of Students, which I promptly did. I learned that others had been worried about his behavior and had also brought it to the Dean's attention. A few days later, I had heard from other students in the lab that he had been expelled and that the expulsion had made this student angrier, because he had been posting pictures of his weapons on his Facebook page. One appeared to be lying on a table in the research lab.

Needless to say, these circumstances lead to uneasiness in the research lab. I felt unsafe. Obviously others did too, as the campus police were more visible, especially around the building where the research lab was located. This lasted for a few days. The next Monday when I arrived on campus, I learned that over the weekend the student was arrested at his residence. It was mind-blowing that I had come so close to a potentially disastrous situation; and how close we as a campus had come to experiencing our own tragedy.

Although I was obviously affected by this situation that hit so close to home, I still did not feel concealed carry was the answer. Again, I wondered what it would have been like if I had a run-in with this student, and that I would not have wanted to be defenseless. In spite of not wanting to feel defenseless, I was still unconvinced that the answer was to carry a firearm with me at all times. However, I was becoming more interested in knowing why others thought concealed carry was the answer, and in turn why opponents of concealed carry on campus did not hold this view. My gut feeling was to side with the opponents of concealed carry, but I thought I did not have an informed argument as to why I believed this. My interest in this topic was shared by my committee chair, so when the time came to select a research topic, we concluded that the concealed carry of firearms on college campuses would be an important and timely topic.

An interesting thing happened as I read through my growing compilation of material. I began seeing the arguments on both sides as logical, thoughtful, and supported by research. It was not that I did not necessarily understand the arguments of the pro-concealed carry on campus position before; I just never knew what they were

until then. This was due not only to not having read these positions, but also to not having had any discussions with anyone who held the pro-concealed carry view.

I usually pride myself on my ability to see both sides of an issue. I see this as the only fair way to make informed decisions. I think it is important to have a critical and analytical eye if I want to make good decisions. I had this concept of critical thinking and fairness instilled in me at a young age. My parents always taught me to be fair to others, and to see others' perspectives before making decisions; and, even then to keep an open mind. From my father being a history professor and always teaching me that our past (individual and collective) holds valuable clues to how to encounter and deal with current situations; to my mother being the best example of the golden rule by always treating others as she wanted to be treated. Artifacts of social justice and fairness surrounded me in my household. From posters of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on my bedroom wall juxtaposed with posters of my favorite sports heroes, to movies on JFK, Malcolm X, to being surrounded by hundreds of books on the history of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and American culture. I learned from these artifacts, and my parents, of the importance of critical thinking, fairness, and seeing others' perspectives.

My present views on concealed carry on campus. As a father of a three-year-old son and one-year-old daughter, I am finding it essential to pass these same values on to my children. My wife is another wonderful example of someone who treats people fairly, and she is dedicated to raising our children to do the same. We have decided that the best way we can convey this to our children is by being an example of what we expect from them.

My education, especially in my graduate program, has also informed the values I hold. My doctoral program is a big proponent of fairness, diversity, and social justice. I have been profoundly affected by my studies through various readings, papers, discussions, and research in social justice, philosophies, epistemologies, ontologies, and paradigms. The program has helped me build a foundation that support beliefs that I embrace in my personal, professional, and researcher identities.

These lessons were valuable in the critical examination of my research topic. I began imaging what it was like to be pro-concealed carry on campus. I found myself understanding rationale through their eyes. I also found myself discussing the topic with friends and colleagues. These informal conversations most often occurred when someone would ask how school was going. They usually wanted to know about my dissertation. As soon as I said I was researching concealed carry on campus, more often than not, they would tell me they thought it was an interesting topic. They would then proceed to tell me what they thought about concealed carry on campus. What was interesting is that these were rarely short conversations. These individuals would easily talk about this for 10, 15, 20 minutes or more. In these conversations I heard people working through their reasoning of why they leaned one way or the other. In many of these conversations I observed them wrestling with the issue, much as I had done. I say this because even though many generally believed they were on one side of the issue, they were conceding points as to why the other side may not necessarily be wrong. Many of their thought processes on the issue were resonating with mine, because they were firm at times, and concessionary at other times. The conceptual paths on which people were traveling to

formulate their stance on the issue were becoming fascinating to me. These conceptual paths were how they ultimately made meaning of concealed carry on campus.

After my research, and discussion with friends and colleagues, I found myself still wondering where I stood on the issue. While my visceral reaction was initially to oppose concealed carry on campus, I found myself moving more to the center of the issue. This position evolved from becoming more informed on the topic, and holding myself accountable to the values of fairness and critical thinking I find fundamentally imperative.

Study Delimitations

I selected one institution of higher education as the bounded system, or case, for this study. Campus constituents from three categories at this institution were participants in the study. These three categories include: staff, faculty/instructor, and student affairs practitioners. The sample included 15 participants. Due to the nature of the small sample size, statistically generalizing to a larger population is not a goal and not possible. The goal of this inquiry was to learn about CCOC from the campus constituents' perspectives. These perspectives may have transferability to readers who may be able to relate through similar experiences, contexts and situations.

Since this study was only be conducted by me, there was a need to ensure rigor to make sure findings are not a not figments of my imagination (Merriam, 2009). Steps were taken and certain criteria will be implemented for rigor. These methods were trustworthiness and triangulation. Each is discussed in more depth within Chapter III – Research Methodology.

Chapter Summary

Concealed carry firearms on college campuses, also known as CCOC, has been a much-debated topic since the Virginia Tech campus-shooting incident in 2007. The debate has maintained momentum since 2007, as campuses (NIU, Texas Tech, Northern California) and other shooting incidents (Aurora movie theater, Oregon Mall, and Sandy Hook Elementary School) continue to occur. This debate has challenged policies and laws at institutions and in states, as the majority does not allow CCOC. Many of these challenges have been thwarted. However, some have been successful in passing legislation that now prohibits IHE from making policies that ban CCOC. As of the time of writing this dissertation, Oregon, Wisconsin, Colorado, and Mississippi have been successful in changing their laws. It is apparent that this issue is gaining momentum in higher education.

However, there is little empirical data that would suggest ways for higher education administrators to deal with this issue. There is a need for more research concerning how those on campus feel about the issue of CCOC, as this perspective is lacking in the literature. In the next chapter I review current literature on the issue, beginning with a macro look at the national landscape, and then focus on what exists regarding IHE and concealed carry firearms.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Campus-shooting incidents have sparked a national debate regarding the concealed carry of firearms at institutions of higher education (IHE). This review of literature explores the history and anatomy of these incidents, and the involvement of national groups influencing the debate. This review also explores empirical studies and theoretical pieces regarding behavior, geography, and characteristics of gun owners on and off college campuses. It further exposes the arguments and rationale for and against concealed carry on campus (CCOC). Though some of the literature points to gun issues in general, these pieces are still important because they contextualize the campus issue and provide a necessary framework for the more specific, on-campus concealed carry debate. Finally, the studies that uncover campus constituents' perceptions of firearms on college campus will be analyzed.

The Prevalence of Guns in the United States

This section presents studies that give context to the gun issue in the United States. These studies have illustrated what the gun population looks like, and how it has grown in the last century. These studies also demonstrate how guns are acquired, and the purposes for people owning them. Finally, and most conducive to this study, why people carry guns is presented.

Gun Availability and Acquisition

The issue of gun availability and acquisition in the U.S. is important to consider because it demonstrates societal attitudes toward gun possession. It is also important to understand due to the obvious fact that people cannot commit shooting incidents without a gun. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) estimates about 223 million guns became available from 1899 – 1993; 77 million were handguns, and 40 million of those were produced between 1973-1993 (Lindeen, 2010; Zawitz, 1995). The number of guns reported by private citizens was 260-300 million by 2004, 40% of which were handguns (Hepburn, Miller, Azrael, & Hemenway, 2007; Wintermute, 2011). Obtaining a handgun in the United States is considered by some to be too easy (Vernick, Hodge, & Webster, 2007). Those opposed state laws that are more restrictive claim they have not shown a decrease in crime, whereas the expansion of concealed carry laws in part lead to decreasing rates of homicide and violent crime in the United States (Lott & Mustard, 1997; Mauser, 2007).

Reasons to Own and Carry a Gun

Motivations for owning and carrying guns were the focus of the following studies. In one survey, researchers sought to understand gun carrying at a national level and found that respondents carried primarily for protection (Kleck & Gertz, 1998). In a national survey of gunstock in the U.S., gun owners were asked to indicate the most important reason they owned a gun. Researchers found that 46% owned for safety (Hepburn et al., 2007). In another study, permit holders were specifically asked certain questions about how, when, and why they carry (Smith, 2003). Results were that 78% of permit holders carried because it made them feel safer, 95.1% carried as a general precaution, and 85%

carry the gun loaded (Smith, 2003). These are interesting statistics because they illustrate why citizens and, more specifically, why concealed carry permit holders choose to arm themselves.

This section helps lay out the context of gun ownership at a national level. This helps understand much about how U.S. society perceives the purpose of firearms, and to what extent they are available. The next section examines the leading arguments people use to defend, and to oppose, the ownership and carrying of firearms.

Arguments For and Against Gun Control in the General Population

This section explores the larger national context of the gun control debate, and includes concealed carry of firearms. Examining gun control at this level is integral to providing context for the on-campus debate. First, in this section I will present the arguments for the expansion of gun rights including concealed carry. Following, the opposing side will be outlined, which seeks more restrictive gun control, especially in concealed-carry circumstances. An important note is that many of the following assertions are made as inferences from statistics made to leverage each side's arguments. Many of these are set up as causal claims, while they most likely support a correlational claim. Those on either side of the debate employ this strategy.

Arguments for the Expansion of Gun Rights and Concealed Carry

The issue of safety is integral to the arguments made by opponents of gun control. Opponents argue that law-abiding citizens are not as safe as they could be if armed. (Hock, 2009; Lindeen, 2010; Lott, 2010). A fact sheet posted on the Students for Concealed Carry (SCC) website and authored by the NRA and ILA (Right-to-carry 2008,

2008) addresses concealed carry specifically. The statement asserts a citizen's right to self-defense as a fundamental right with historical roots. The NRA/ILA fact sheet cites a long history of the right to self-defense, from Cicero 2,000 years ago, to Sir William Blackstone's and the English Bill of Rights, to Sir Michael Foster in the 18th century.

The reduction in criminal trends due to a concealed carry environment is credited in the NRA/ILA fact sheet as well. These trends indicate that in "Right-to-Carry" states, violent crime rates have been lower since 2003 than any time since the mid-1970s (Right-to-carry 2008, 2008). Moreover, "Right-to-Carry" states average lower violent crime rates than other states (Right-to-carry 2008, 2008).

Proponents of concealed carry contend that more people carrying guns would deter crime. This particular scenario would, "…make for greater civility and safety in difficult situations (e.g., in a road-side argument or minor brawl)...and will reduce the possibility of such situations spiraling out of control from minor to major crimes" (Unnithan, Pogrebin, Stretesky, & Venor, 2008, p. 197). Opponents of gun control concede the fact there are examples of abuse of the law out there. However, they say that there are bad apples in many parts of society (including elected officials and the clergy) and people with concealed carry permits that abuse the privilege are statistically fewer (Why our campuses are NOT safer without concealed handguns, n.d.)

Proponents of gun ownership also argue private ownership of guns serves as a deterrent to criminals (Hock, 2009). Deterrence can take many forms, however opponents argue private ownership of guns is the most effective. They argue that this is especially the case because police alone are not effective in deterring criminals, and that criminals choose victims based on how likely they are to defend themselves (Hock,

2009). Thus, ensuring citizens have access to weapons hinders criminals' chances of success (Hock, 2009). A study by Lott and Mustard (1997) examined the benefits concealed carry has on deterring crime. One conclusion of the study was that concealed carry does deter violent crime and argued that if the whole country had adopted right-to-carry laws, criminals would have been deterred enough to prevent more than 1,000 murders and over 4,000 rapes in one year. Also concluded was an annual gain of $5.74 billion would be realized should remaining states adopt right-to-carry laws (Lott & Mustard, 1997).

Proponents of gun ownership consider the benefits guns introduce for women. The main argument is that guns are the great equalizer between the sexes (Lott, 2010). While the argument of declining crime rates when people carry concealed firearms is significant for opponents of gun control, the argument becomes even stronger when considering that more women carrying concealed firearms leads to even steeper declines (3-4 times less than men) in crimes against women (Lott, 2010).

The Second Amendment carries significance for those who advocate for expansive concealed carry laws. They argue the right to bear arms is a right guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. The interpretation of the Second Amendment plays a significant role on either side of the debate. The main argument is whether the Second Amendment was written with the intent to guarantee the right to bear arms to a collective party (the State), or to each individual citizen (Hock, 2009). Proponents of concealed carry argue that the Second Amendment secures the right for individual citizens to own and carry (Hock, 2009).

Arguments for Gun Control and Against Concealed Carry

Safety is also a primary concern of those on the gun control side of the debate. People and communities are less safe with more guns, they argue. Studies regarding guns in homes are used to reach this conclusion. One study found homes with guns are more likely to experience a suicide, and most likely the suicide of a young person (Brent, et al., 1991; Vernick et al., 2007). Furthermore, just owning a gun puts people at more risk of suicide (Cukier & Sidel, 2006; Cummings, Koepsell, Grossman, Savarino, & Thompson, 1997; Vernick et al., 2007). Homicides are also three times more likely in homes where a resident owns a gun (Kellermann et al., 1993). Accidental discharge is also a concern, especially because some victims are adolescents and children under twelve years of age (Kellermann, Somes, Rivara, Lee, & Banton, 1998). Legal guns are also frequently used in domestic violence (Cukier & Sidel, 2006).

Proponents of gun control argue the government has a responsibility to intervene with policy. Some have considered the legal and ethical implications of more restrictive gun licensing policies. These considerations state that it is legally and ethically appropriate for the government to enact policies more restrictive of handgun licensing, as long as data show these restrictions reduce gun-related harm (Vernick et al., 2007). What should be ethically challenged, they say, is a government which enacts and enforces policy granting a wider access to guns, which may benefit a few at the expense of the larger population’s risks of violence (Vernick et al., 2007).

Proponents of gun control take issue with concealed carry permits. The procedure to obtain a permit, they argue, is not rigorous enough, and ultimately guns will land in the hands of dangerous people (Siebel, 1997). Siebel's report (1997) outlined ways

criminals and mentally ill people obtain weapons. In some cases these weapons are used in a crime. A primary concern of the report is that out-of-state background checks do not eliminate all dangerous individuals (e.g., persons convicted of violent misdemeanors, parolees, and alcohol abusers) from obtaining a permit. The report also included examples of criminals convicted of homicide and manslaughter who obtained a permit legally. This report also identified the dangers of mentally ill people obtaining permits because police are not always able to investigate mental illness history due to laws of privacy restrictions (Hsu, 1995; Siebel, 1997). Finally, the report addressed the perceived notion that permit holders are always law-abiding, mature, and responsible individuals. To illustrate this point, Siebel published a list of instances where citizens who were carrying weapons legally, caused the death of another person (Siebel, 1997). Additionally, concerns regarding permits extend to the perceived lack of rigorous training required to obtain a permit. Specific concerns of training include the lack of training in non-violent conflict resolutions, as well as handgun safety training (Hock, 2009; Siebel, 1997).

Among the general population, these are some of the leading arguments in the debate. Arguments in favor of guns and concealed carry mainly addressed the ability for law-abiding citizens to defend themselves against crime as a fundamental constitutional right. Arguments for gun control and against concealed carry mainly focused on issues of safety, perpetuating violence, and lack of rigor regarding permits. In the next section I outline concealed carry laws from state to state, and college campus concealed carry policies within each state.

Concealed Carry Law and Policy

Understanding laws and policies of concealed carry provides a conceptual foundation for the debate. While through the present study I do not intend to analyze policy, the current social climate of these laws and policies is relevant to the debate. Moreover, these issues are included in much of the literature and it would be remiss not to include this information. I will also discuss campus reactions to legislation overturning gun-ban policies, as well as how national organizations such as the SCC and Brady Campaign influence the debate.

Concealed Carry Weapons Permit

Concealed carry weapons (CCW) permits are issued under the authority of the state. CCW permits are issued (specifics vary from state to state) to persons who fill out an application, pay a fee, provide proof of state residence, meet a minimum age qualification (generally 21 years of age), complete a background check, are not under indictment or have been convicted of a felony, are not unlawfully present in the United States, and typically have completed a safety or training course (ARS §13-3112.N.; Hock, 2009). Federal law (United States Code, Title18, Section 922(d)) prohibits nine categories of people possessing a firearm, and thus prohibited from obtaining a CCW permit: 1) Convicted felon; 2) Fugitives from justice; 3) Controlled substance users; 4) Persons adjudicated mentally defective, or those committed to a mental institution; 5) Illegal aliens; 6) Dishonorably discharged veterans; 7) Persons who have renounced their U.S. citizenship; 8) Persons under court order for stalking or threatening an intimate partner; and 9) Persons convicted of domestic violence or child abuse.

State Concealed Carry Laws

The states that passed concealed carry legislation are known as “Shall Issue” states, because anyone meeting the qualifications shall be issued a permit (Siebel, 1997). Today there are 38 “Shall Issue” states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin (State-by-state, n.d.; State laws at a glance, n.d.).

Eight states, including the District of Columbia, are considered “May Issue” states: California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island. In these states the police or county sheriff typically still have discretion regarding who may receive a CCW permit. The applicant must show a “need” for the permit (State-by-state, n.d.). Applicants who receive CCW permits, i.e., those with a ‘need,’ typically are celebrities, private investigators, politicians, and those who have taken out a restraining order on another individual (State-by-state, n.d.). Three states (Alaska, Vermont, and Wyoming) allow residents to carry concealed weapons without a CCW permit; and Illinois is the only state that does not allow CCW permits (State-by-state, n.d; State laws at a glance, n.d.). Also, although Arizona does not technically require a concealed carry permit, it is recommended in order to take advantage of certain privileges (e.g., being able to carry in other states, also known as reciprocity) (Rau, 2010; New Arizona CCW laws, n.d.).

"Right-to-Carry" is another term used in the debate by the National Rifle Association (NRA) and Institute of Legislative Action (ILA) (Right-to-carry 2008, 2008). "Right-to-Carry" is used interchangeably with "Shall Issue", but additionally includes Alaska, Vermont, and Wyoming because a license is not needed to carry a concealed firearm (State-by-state, n.d.; State gun laws at glance, n.d.). In sum, there are 41 "Right-to-Carry" states, 8 "May Issue" states, and 1 state where there is no issuance of CCW permits. However, being in a "Right-to-Carry" state does not necessarily mean there is a "Right-to-Carry" on college campuses. This distinction will be explained next.

State Concealed Carry Laws and College Campus Policies

There is no federal ban of concealed carry on college and university campuses, leaving the authority to the states (LaPoint, 2009-2010). Historically, few of the institutions allowed concealed carry, such as Colorado State University, and Blue Ridge Community College in Virginia, and because of state law, all of Utah's public colleges and universities (State-by-state, n.d.). As discussed above, there are 49 states with concealed carry laws. Currently, 22 states ban concealed carry firearms on campus: Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming (Guns on campus overview, 2012). In 25 states the decision to prohibit or allow concealed carry firearms on campus is left up to each IHE: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia (Guns on campus

overview, 2012). Utah laws are such that they explicitly allow concealed carry firearms on its public college campuses (Guns on campus overview, 2012). Finally, recent changes in Wisconsin legislation puts it closer in line with Utah, by making colleges allow concealed carry (Guns on campus overview, 2012). The makeup of this list of states and schools allowing or banning CCOC has begun to change, as pro-concealed carry legislation has been passed in some of these states, many within 2012. Next, is further discussion about the recent changes to legislation in Wisconsin, as well as Colorado, Oregon, and Mississippi, and how institutions have reacted to these changes, follows.

Colleges' Reactions to Changes in Concealed Carry Legislation and Policy

There is limited documentation that explains IHE reactions to pro-concealed carry laws being passed in their states. This section explains how some of the IHE in these states reacted to their state's changes in legislation. Some IHE have challenged the laws in court and some try to work around the new laws. The reactions of IHE in Utah, Colorado, Wisconsin, Mississippi, and Oregon are discussed below.

Utah passed concealed carry legislation in 1995, making it a "Shall Issue" state (Kopel, 2009). This legislation allows concealed carry at its nine public institutions (Kopel, 2009). However, the University of Utah kept its gun ban policy in place (Kopel, 2009). Supplemental legislation, passed in 2004, made it clear that the University of Utah must follow concealed carry statutes (Kopel, 2009). The university filed a lawsuit, saying allowing guns on campus violated the university's academic freedom (Kopel, 2009; *University of Utah v. Shurtleff, 2006)*. The Utah Supreme Court denied the

university's claim and found for the state. The University of Utah then filed in federal district court. The lawsuit was withdrawn in 2007, when the legislature and the school struck a deal, allowing students who live in dormitories to choose their roommates based on whether they had one of these permits (Kopel, 2009).

Lawsuits were brought in Colorado challenging the University of Colorado's (CU) authority to enforce its gun ban policy, effective since 1994 (Ferner, 2011). The Colorado Court of Appeals ruled in April 2010 that CU was in violation of the Concealed Carry Act of 2003 (Ferner, 2011; *Students for Concealed Carry on Campus v. The Regents of the University of Colorado*, 2010). CU's Board of Regents challenged the Colorado Court of Appeals decision in the Colorado Supreme Court (Ferner, 2011; *The Regents of the University of Colorado v. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus,* 2012). In March 2012, the Colorado Supreme Court affirmed the judgment of the Colorado Court of Appeals and ruled that CU's campus weapons ban violated state law, and CU must allow those with CCW permits to bring their weapons onto any CU campus (Biemiller, 2012; Grasgreen, 2012; *The Regents of the University of Colorado v. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus,* 2012).

Additionally, recent legislation has changed CCOC laws in Wisconsin, Mississippi, and Oregon. Wisconsin legislation previously prohibited CCW permits anywhere in the state. New legislation now allows concealed carry in Wisconsin, making no exception for college campuses (Burnett, 2011; Kelderman; 2011; S. 93, 2011). However, CCW permit holders may not carry their firearms in campus buildings as long as there are signs posted (Grasgreen, 2011). So, many colleges are doing what they can

to get signs up on their campuses (Grasgreen, 2011). Many college leaders in Wisconsin believe this is the best way to combat concealed carry for now (Grasgreen, 2011).

Mississippi law was changed in early summer 2011, which now allows CCW permit holders to carry firearms on campuses (Grasgreen, 2011; Kelderman, 2011). However, the law was hidden in several other laws and is currently being disputed because it conflicts with the current law which prohibits carry in public and private school buildings (Grasgreen, 2011). It passed without getting attention from Mississippi public colleges because it was thought to apply only to court officials (e.g., public defenders and prosecutors) (Kelderman, 2011). Until there is a resolution Mississippi colleges are proceeding with their no-weapons policy (Grasgreen, 2011).

Until recently, Utah was the only state allowing concealed carry at all public college/universities and prohibiting their institutions from creating their own restrictions (State-by-state, n.d.). Now, Oregon has joined ranks and has made its universities unable to enforce gun bans (Graves, 2011). The Oregon Court of Appeals ruled the Oregon University System ban on guns exceeded its authority and was invalid (Graves, 2011; *Oregon Firearms Educational Foundation v. Board of Higher Education and Oregon University System*, 2011). All seven campuses which make up the Oregon University System oppose the ruling of the Oregon Court of Appeals (Grasgreen, 2011). The Oregon University System is looking for alternate ways around the law, and is considering clauses for residence hall contracts and football stadiums which would ban guns in dorms and the football stadium in lieu of a campus-wide gun ban (Grasgreen, 2011). For the time being, security officers approach anyone who appears to be carrying a gun to ensure they have a proper permit (Grasgreen, 2011).

Changes in legislation, and challenges to gun ban policies in higher education are the reality of higher education today (Abraham, 2010). Attempts to change laws, which would loosen CCOC policy, have increased since 2007 (Kelderman, 2011; Villahermosa; 2008). Many of these proposed changes in legislation have been defeated. In 2009, 13 states introduced legislation that would allow guns on campus; the laws in all 13 states were defeated (Abraham, 2010; Bradley, 2009). In 2011, 12 states have seen bills defeated or delayed (Grasgreen, 2011). In all, since 2007, there have been 65 legislative proposal defeats in 32 states regarding guns on campus (Guns on campus; n.d.). However, some legislation has succeeded. Within the last few years, the number of colleges allowing concealed carry has doubled (Wiseman, 2011). Some view the recent decisions in Wisconsin, Mississippi, and Oregon as a shift in momentum that will likely lead to the reversal of more gun bans and more CCOC policies (Grasgreen, 2011; Jervis, 2011).

Initially, IHE had to deal with the challenges to campus gun bans and changes in state legislation, much of which were defeated. More recently however, some IHE have had to deal with successful changes in gun-ban policies and state legislation. These recent decisions have made this issue a more tangible one for IHE, as they are now confronted with the changing landscape of the relationship between higher education and firearms. If these trends continue, it will become increasingly important for campus administrators to prudently navigate these new laws and policies. Next, an examination of how national organizations engage the issue and how they advocate on the issue of CCOC is presented.

National Organizations' Influence

As posited earlier, campus-shooting incidents are being used to rationalize stances in the larger gun control and campus concealed carry debates. National groups such as the NRA, Brady Campaign, SCC, and SGFS are some of the largest contributors to both sides of the concealed carry platform (Hock, 2009; Lindeen, 2010). Professional organizations affiliated with higher education are also highly visible in the debate. These groups are committed to their respective sides in the battle for higher education.

The National Rifle Association (NRA) advocates for gun rights, with its main focus on blocking gun control legislation, and promoting the increased legalization of ammunition and weapons (Flannery, 2008). Founded in 1871 by Col. William C. Church and Gen. George Wingatethe. NRA has prided itself in firearm training and education for 140 years (A brief history of the NRA, n.d.), and has widespread influence on Second Amendment advocacy (Hock, 2009; A brief history of the NRA, n.d.), and political influence on elected officials (A brief history of the NRA, n.d.; Flannery, 2008). The NRA has specifically written to legislative members opposing bills allowing universities to regulate firearm possession (i.e. Maine) (Siebel & Rostron, 2007).

Students for Concealed Carry (SCC) is a national, grassroots organization which was formed the day after the Virginia Tech incident, and boasts more than 36,000 members of chapters on 350 campuses (Giroux, 2008-2009; Kopel, 2009; State-by-state, n.d.). The primary purpose of SCC is to extend gun-carrying rights to individuals on campus (McLelland & Frenkil, 2009). The SCC's signature protest is the "Empty Holster Protest". This is an annual peaceful demonstration in which students wear empty

holsters on campus in order to represent the “disarming of law-abiding citizens” and also to debate about CCOC policies and laws (Empty holster protest, n.d.).

On the opposing side of the issue is the Brady Campaign, which is a national organization originally founded as the National Council to Control Handguns in 1974. It was renamed once more before becoming the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence in 2001 (History of the Brady Campaign, n.d.). The Brady Campaign’s main initiative is to advocate electing public officials who support legislation regarding gun regulation laws and public policies (Mission statement, n.d.). The Brady Campaign openly advocates against concealed carry on college campuses, citing the fact that college campuses are a dangerous place for weapons due to high-risk behaviors (e.g. binge drinking, drug abuse, and elevated risks of suicide) (Overview, n.d.).

The Students for Gun Free Schools (SGFS) is a national group of more than 12,000 members who advocate against CCOC. SGFS opposes universities and colleges being forced to allow students, staff, and faculty carry concealed handguns on campuses (About us, n.d.). The group contends handguns on campus would only contribute to more crime, especially because of college campuses have higher rates of alcohol use and depression (LaPoint, 2009-2010). The group believes security should continue to be the job of law enforcement alone (LaPoint, 2009-2010).

Professional organizations associated with higher education have also made statements and taken stances on CCOC. The Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA), the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I), the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA), and the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) released a joint

statement against concealed carry on university campuses. These organizations thought it necessary to release this statement in light of recent increase of legislative proposals that would allow concealed carry firearms on campuses. They stated that concealed carry on campus was a dangerous proposition, and would be a threat to learning and working environments (Statement Against Concealed Weapon Carry on University Campuses, 2011).

The National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) has a statement on its website which provides a review of concealed carry on campus, a list of state laws and polices, and statements from higher education professional associations like International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, Inc. (IACLEA), Student Affairs in Higher Education Consortium (SAHEC) (both of which do not support CCOC), and student the organizations of SCC and SFGS. The authors of the NASPA statement concluded that this was a divisive issue and encourages members to become more knowledgeable about it by having further discussions with colleagues at their institutions, and within the NASPA organization (Erwin & Mills, 2009).

In 2012, more than 300 college and university presidents drafted an open letter stating that concealed carry on campus would make campuses less safe (Grasgreen, 2013). Two dozen of these presidents took this message to Washington, D.C. a few months later during an annual conference for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities to relay the same message in person. The members of the organization who were present at the conference expressed the need to prohibit firearms on campus is important enough to directly challenge legislation allowing concealed carry on campus (Grasgreen, 2013).

This section included discussion of concealed carry laws in each state, as well as policies at college campuses within those states. Campus' reactions to changes in states legislation indicated that some campuses were responding with lawsuits or ways to work around the law. National organizations play a role in legislation and policy, and are significant voices in the debate. Next, campus-shooting incidents are examined, specifically as they relate to fueling the CCOC debate.

Campus-Shooting Incidents

The Virginia Tech campus-shooting incident caught the attention of many. This incident and subsequent incidents (e.g., Northern Illinois University) are what fuel, and push into the national spotlight, the CCOC debate. These incidents, due to their devastating nature, capture the public's attention and have a direct impact on the development of law and social policy (Hickey De Haven, 2009). While the death of any campus constituent due to violence is tragic, these shootings are also a concern to the higher education community because they represent an anarchic characteristic where the attacker's primary target is the institution itself, and anyone representing an association with the institution (Hickey De Haven, 2009; Newman, 2004). The overall safety of those at IHE has become a forum for people and groups to debate the best way to ensure safety. This section highlights the history and details of these incidents, the media's impact, and what these incidents look like.

History of Shooting Incidents on Campus

It is important to define what a campus-shooting incident is because such events are at the epicenter of the debate. A joint report filed by the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Education, and the F.B.I. operationally defined an "incident" as involving

a directed assault (Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010). The definition states the targets of the violence need to be an IHE student, faculty, or employee; and that the attacker needed to have ability to employ lethal force.

Incidents involving guns on college and university campuses that result in physical harm or death are not a new phenomenon. Shootings have been occurring at institutions of higher education since the early 20th century. In the past fifty years there were shootings in the 1960s (University of Texas) and 1970s (California State University). However, significant shootings have become more frequent within the last two decades (Drysdale et al., 2010). Post-secondary campus-shooting incidents in the United States have been more thoroughly examined since 1990.

Many institutions experienced their campus-shootings before the Virginia Tech incident (Asmussen & Cresswell, 1995; Fox, 2008; Hickey De Haven, 2009). Subsequent shootings at Northern Illinois University by a graduate student in 2008, and the February 2010 University of Alabama Huntsville incident of a professor shooting her colleagues, have continued to keep CCOC in the national spotlight. (Burruss et al., 2010; Hickey, De Haven, 2009. In April 2012, seven people were killed by a former student at Oikos University in California (Smith, 2012), which is likely to continue the debate. In fact, this incident is seen by proponents of CCOC to be the most current example of the problem of having a gun-free campus (Soderstrom, 2012).

The following table is useful in illustrating the history of campus-shooting incidents at post-secondary institutions.

Table 1

List of Post-Secondary Shootings

Location	**Year**
University of Texas	1966
California State University	1976
University of Iowa	1991
Bard College	1992
The University of North Carolina	1995
San Diego State University	1996
The University of Washington	2000
The University of Arkansas	2000
Pacific Lutheran University	2001
Appalachian School of Law	2002
University of Arizona Nursing School	2002
Case Western Reserve University of School of Business	2003
Shepard University	2006
Virginia Tech	2007
University of Northern Illinois	2008
University of Alabama in Huntsville	2010
Oikos University Shooting	2012

Note. Information compiled from Asmussen and Cresswell, 1995; Campus Shootings, 2012; Fox, 2008; and Hickey De Haven, 2009.

What Campus-Shooting Incidents Have Looked Like

Studies have dissected the anatomy of incidents of violence on campuses, especially campus-shooting incidents. Their findings include illuminating information about who perpetrates these attacks, where on campus they take place, what the victims looked like, and what kind of weapons were used. Incidents of violence most commonly took place in residence halls, offices, instructional areas, and common areas (Drysdale et al., 2010). The typical attack is perpetrated by one individual, usually male, and with an

average age of 28 (Drysdale et al., 2010). Most of the attackers were students, followed by employees (Drysdale et al., 2010). Victims were predominately students, followed by campus employees. A significant finding, and one having implications for the necessity of the CCOC discussion as a means to prevent campus-shooting incidents, is that firearms were used most often in these campus violence incidents (Drysdale et al., 2010).

Other literature pinpointed graduate students as the most likely perpetrators of shooting attacks in the last two decades (Fox, 2008). Fox argues that graduate students are likely perpetrators due to their detachment from social and cultural activities, coupled with the many challenges, pressures, and responsibilities they manage, all of which are heightened by their sense of self-worth being tied to their academic achievement (Fox, 2008).

These studies inform the phenomenon of campus violence, especially campus-shooting incidents. They illustrate what these attacks look like, whom they involve, and how they end. The most significant implications for this paper are to prevent these attacks in the future. Because most of these attacks employ guns, some feel the best way to combat such a circumstance is by arming teachers, and at universities, professors and students.

Impact of the Media

Media coverage becomes important in this discussion because of its apparent impact on how people react to perceptions of their safety. After the Virginia Tech incident, radio, TV, and print reporters were quick to weigh in with analysis, commentary, questions, accusations, and suggestions for policy (TeSelle, 2007). The discourse included examinations of Cho Seung-Hui, especially his experiences with peers

and teachers, questions regarding how this event could happen, and policy recommendations to prevent similar events in the future (TeSelle, 2007). The effects of this coverage have been studied, especially as they relate to the possibility of perpetuating further school violence.

Students in one study attributed less of a causal relationship between violence portrayed in the media and school violence than did faculty and administrators (Fallahi, Austad, Fallon, & Leishman, 2009). The researchers explained this difference as a function of a generation gap, asserting students are more accustomed to media violence than older generations (Fallahi et al., 2009). However, another study reported that students responded that the Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University shooting incidents actually increased their fear of being murdered on campus (Kaminski, Koons-Witt, Thompson, & Weiss, 2010). The researchers of this study concluded that it was conceivable media coverage of any future campus-shooting incident could also contribute to fear felt by campus constituents.

Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, and Jimerson, (2010) argue that the media use these atypical events to accentuate speculations that the incidence of school violence is increasing, and that this leads to unnecessarily escalating the public's fear. Borum et al. (2010) further argued that this over-the-top perception of the risks is unrealistic, and does little to address concerns of safety. These infrequent incidents receive excessive media attention, and should not be a basis for generalizations (Borum et al., 2010).

Advocacy groups and political parties feed the generalizations and fear as well (Glassner, 1999). This is evident in the arguments by groups on either side of the CCOC debate. Many of these arguments cater to the perceived need for protection from others.

National organizations contribute many common arguments for and against concealed carry in the on and off-campus contexts. Fear for one's safety is a basis for many of these arguments.

This section focused on campus-shooting incidents. The history of these incidents indicated they are not a new phenomenon. The media was shown to have some impact on students' feelings of safety, but it has also been ineffective in perpetuating fear for others. In the next section, I explore concealed carry on university and college campuses. Concealed firearms are one proposed remedy for campus violence, especially campus-shooting incidents, in which the perpetrator can quickly take advantage of students congregating in classrooms and hallways to increase the number of victims.

Concealed Carry on University and College Campuses

For proponents of CCOC, the debate mainly rests on ensuring the ability to defend oneself from a campus-shooting incident. Protection from other acts of violence also plays a supplemental role in their arguments. Opponents of CCOC argue that campuses are inappropriate places to add more guns due to their unique behaviors, populations, and environmental influences. This section discusses behaviors, geography, and characteristics of gun-owning students, as well as rationale and arguments for and against CCOC. In addition, the following section highlights studies that focus on how various campus constituents react to guns and CCOC are discussed. Finally, a gap in the literature and thus the need for this study is identified.

Students and Guns

In this section, I consider studies that examined relationships between guns and students. These researchers have investigated characteristics, behaviors, and geography

of gun-owning students. This section helps give context to the discussion of CCOC, because, while these studies did not necessarily address concealed carry, they do give a glimpse at how students have interacted with guns.

Miller, Hemenway, and Wechsler (2002) studied gun possession and gun threats at IHE. Data came from students completing questionnaires at 120 colleges and findings were that 4% of the students indicated they have a firearm on campus. The researchers also found that students who own guns on college campuses are more likely to drink excessively than non-gun owning students (Miller et al., 2002). These behaviors are mirrored in the general public. Nationally, firearm owners were more likely to drink five drinks or more a day, more than sixty drinks a month, and drink and drive (Wintermute, 2011). Gun-owning students were also more likely to engage in risky behavior, such as driving under the influence, vandalizing property, and unprotected sex (Miller et al., 2002). Also, two thirds of student with guns at college report binge drinking (Miller et al., 2002). The Miller et al. (2002) study explored who these students are and why they carry guns. Students who own weapons for protection are more likely to be women, to be African-American, to live off campus, to attend an urban area college, or to use drugs (Miller et al., 2002). Those who own for protection are more likely to have been previously threatened with a gun (Miller et al., 2002).

Tewksbury and Mustaine (2003) surveyed college students about carrying a weapon (e.g., a gun, mace, club, body alarm, or knife). Of the more than 1,500 students surveyed, 17% said they carried a gun. Findings of this study support some of the same findings from the Miller et al. (2002) study. The use of alcohol and drugs are significant predictors of whether a student will carry a weapon (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2003). A

unique finding of this study was that students who were unemployed were also more likely to carry a weapon for self-protection.

However, in an article on the SCC website, these arguments against concealed carry were rebutted. The statement claimed that concealed carry holders engage in criminal behavior less often than unlicensed gun owners (Why our campuses are NOT safer without concealed handguns, n.d.). Moreover, the article took issue with the Miller et al. (2002) survey, stating that the study likely included many respondents who did not have a CCW permit. Thus, behavior of these students does not represent CCW permit holders accurately.

Only a couple of researchers have looked at the issue by U.S. region and institution type among college students. The first study found a higher percentage of students carried a weapon in the South (Meilman, Leichliter, & Presley, 1998). According to the same study, students carried a weapon at a higher percentage at public more than private, and 2-year more than 4-year institutions. The Miller et al. (2002) study had similar finding. Students carried more often on campuses in U.S. regions where surrounding household gun ownership levels were higher, such as the Southern and Mountain states (Cook & Ludwig, 1997; Miller et al., 2002).

Leading Arguments For and Against Concealed Carry on Campus

The CCOC discussion stems from the larger debate regarding gun control. Earlier evidence suggests that a significant reason people own and carry guns is for self-protection. Arguments for and against CCOC account for much of the discourse. Many of these arguments provide rationale for increasing safety on campus. In some cases, the

issues, arguments, and populations look similar to the larger context. In other cases rests the unique challenges and arguments higher education faces. Also similar to the larger context, many of these arguments are assertions made based on crime, demographic, and other statistics, many times setting up what appears to be posited as causal claims.

Arguments for concealed carry guns on campus. Again, the primary concerns for either side of this debate are for campus and individual safety. The contention of those who support more guns on campus (via CCW permits) is that students, faculty, and administrators will better be able to defend themselves in the event of a campus-shooting incident similar to Virginia Tech in 2007. Other arguments for CCOC focus on general safety and constitutional arguments. In the following sections I examine the more notable arguments for CCOC.

Advocates for CCOC maintain there would be an extra layer of security for a student from random acts of gun violence if students were able to carry concealed weapons (Roper, 2011). Advocates also argue policies prohibiting CCOC are unfair because universities are not able to protect students when these incidents occur (Roper, 2011). This contention arises from the unique threat of an “active shooter.” Attackers involved in campus-shooting incidents have been classified as active shooters because they are unconcerned with taking hostages and negotiating with police; their main goal is killing as many people as possible (Kopel, 2009). Students are unable to rely on a police response because in the time taken for police to arrive on scene, more people are likely being injured or killed. In the case of an active shooter, when seconds are precious those in proximity are most able to respond and save lives (Kopel, 2009, Usborne, 2010).

Potter (2007) argued that an approved concealed-carry policy may be the best option to prevent future school massacres because it is not possible to achieve the same level of security that, e.g., an airport has. Potter continued the argument by asserting that the concept of IHE converting themselves into domestic "Green Zones" with walls, gates, scanners, and checkpoints at every building is a ridiculous notion. It is equally unreasonable to get all guns off the streets and out of all purses and glove compartments for that matter (Potter, 2007). Controlling access to illegal weapons is as hard as controlling access to illegal drugs (Potter, 2007). Due to the impossibility of these solutions, Potter claimed the NRA wins by default; and guns should be given to students in the hope they keep would-be attackers restrained.

Proponents of concealed carry cite research supporting the idea that their approach does keep would-be attackers in check. Mass public shootings, at, e.g., Virginia Tech, were studied in relation to concealed carry (Lott, 2010). Lott contended that such incidents were nearly eliminated in states enacting nondiscretionary concealed carry laws. He argued that concealed carry makes these schools less vulnerable in the future, and cautions against laws which would ban guns from schools.

Advantages of concealed carry also exist outside the parameters of a mass campus-shooting incident. A student's ability to defend himself or herself in other acts of violence is also of concern. Proponents of CCOC argued, "Why should a 105 lb. woman who is allowed the means to defend herself against a 250 lb. would-be rapist outside of campus not be afforded that same right on campus?" (Why our campuses are NOT safer without concealed handguns, n.d.). This notion is similar to an argument made earlier by Lott (2010), in that a gun is an equalizer between the sexes.

Another argument made on the SCC website attempted to rebut the assertion that guns on campus would detract from a healthy learning environment (Why our campuses are NOT safer without concealed handguns, n.d.). The article posited 1% of the total U.S. population is licensed to carry a gun. Since people are not detracted from living normally in the general public (e.g., going to a movie or the mall) where many people are likely armed, why be detracted from living normally on campus? The article also addresses the SFGS claim that concealed carry would create additional risks for students in a campus environment, citing use of alcohol, drugs, mental illness, and accidental shootings. The argument used campuses allowing concealed carry as examples, stating none of these campuses have seen any of these risks come to fruition (Why our campuses are NOT safer without concealed handguns, n.d.). Another author noted that many U.S. citizens carry CCW permits and crimes of passion/anger have not increased, so why worry that students may use their concealed gun when they are angered (Fennell, 2009)? Believing students are not mature enough and that carrying a weapon would probably result in its use to resolve a conflict or difference is not realistic (Fennell, 2009).

Lastly, proponents of CCOC argue their right to carry for protection is guaranteed by the United States Constitution's Second Amendment (Usborne, 2010). Moreover, state and federal law supersede campus policy (Usborne, 2010). This stance is similar to the position gun rights advocates choose to take in larger context debate.

Arguments against concealed carry on campus. Those who oppose concealed carry at IHE demonstrate concern for individual and campus safety, much like those who support concealed carry. Opponents convey a large, general concern for the safety of students, faculty, and staff who work, reside, and attend classes there. However, their

idea of what makes individuals and campuses safer differ from their opponents' idea. Concerns for safety are based on a number of different reasons. This section includes leading arguments against CCOC.

A university or college campus is an environment full of influences, and young inexperienced students who are susceptible to those influences. Alcohol and drug use are prevalent among traditional college aged students. Ten years ago, binge drinking and illicit drug use were at their highest rates between the ages of 18-25 (SAMHSA, 2001). In 2010, binge drinking and illicit drug use still peaked among this age group, with illicit drug use increasing by 1% from 2009 (SAMHSA, 2011). Moreover, these behaviors are most common among college students (Siebel, 2008).

Serious mental illness (SMI) and suicide attempts peak in this age range as well (SAMHSA, 2003; SAMHSA, 2010). A 2009 survey of college counselors found that 260 counseling centers reported a total of 2,200 students being hospitalized for psychological reasons, that 10.4% of students used their services in 2009, and that 48.4% of students have severe psychological problems (7% percent of whom have an impairment so great they cannot stay in school without psychiatric support) (Gallagher, 2009). More articles raise the same concerns, noting rates of depression (LaPoint, 2009-2010) and alcohol use (Roper, 2011) tend to be higher in this population than others. Rates of college students with mental illness are rising steeply (Lewis, 2007). Concerns about the ability of colleges and universities to provide adequate support for students receiving psychiatric care were evident in a national survey regarding reactions to the VT incident (Rassmussen & Johnson, 2008). Opponents of concealed carry contend mixing guns with such an environment would have disastrous implication, arguing that attempted self-

harm, especially suicide, would increase if more guns were allowed on campus (Siebel & Rostron, 2007; Siebel, 2008).

Siebel (2008) argued that introducing guns into an environment where mental illness plays a significant factor for some students could negatively impact the campus community. This contention was examined through campus perceptions of the shootings at VT. A survey conducted on students and faculty/staff uncovered perceptions as to why the event occurred. Respondents believed the incident occurred mainly due to mental health issues and a lack of friendships (Fallahi et al., 2009). Moreover, laws do not necessarily safeguard persons with mental illness from obtaining firearms. Seung Hui Cho obtained two semi-automatic weapons because, while the Federal Gun Control Act of 1968 prohibits anyone who is adjudicated mentally defective or has been committed to a mental institution from obtaining a weapon, loopholes exist due to ambiguous interpretations at the state level of what defines mentally ill (Davies, 2008). Implications for concealed carry laws are evident here because a gun can be sold legally and still wind up on the hands of someone prohibited from owning or carrying a weapon.

Injecting guns into the overall campus environment is concerning for opponents of CCOC. Campuses are environments of impulsive behavior, (e.g., late-night social events usually attended by large groups where alcohol is potentially involved), and guns would make these situations potentially disastrous (Roper, 2011). Campuses are places where students are generally stressed from the rigors of college (LaPoint, 2009-2010). New-found freedom contributes to student stressors and leads to uncertain decisions and behavior (Price, Mrdjenovich, Thompson, & Dake, 2009).

Another significant argument stems from the fact that CCOC is unnecessary because 93% of violence against students occurs off campus (Baum & Klaus, 2005; Siebel & Rostron, 2007). Also, more people with guns would potentially complicate an already chaotic campus-shooting situation. Moreover, when shootings occur, how would the responding authorities distinguish between a law-abiding citizen wielding a firearm in self defense from the "bad guy" committing the attack? (Klausner, 2011)

Even if students and employees had weapons to defend themselves in these campus-shooting situations, would they have the necessary training to fire accurately under stress (Villahermosa, 2008)? Villahermosa mentions that in his background as a firearms instructor for a local sheriff's SWAT team, he is aware of the type of training it takes for accuracy in these situations. There is concern that some constituents, especially faculty and staff, would not maintain a level of training necessary to effectively return fire in campus-shooting situations and may instead hit an innocent bystander (Villahermosa, 2008). Villahermosa warns that state legislators and campus leaders need to know the full implications of arming constituents and should be extremely serious about the amount of commitment and preparation it takes to do it correctly.

Accidental shootings and gun thefts are a concern for opponents of CCOC. Guns on campus are likely to increase the risk of an accidental shooting (Siebel, 2008). Unintentional shootings account for twenty-three percent of accidental firearm deaths occurred because the person was unaware the gun was loaded (Accidental shootings, 2000; Siebel, 2008). Also, to address a primary reason why citizens carry (i.e., for protection), guns in homes were four times more likely used in unintentional shootings than for self-defense (Kellermann et al., 1998; Siebel, 2008). Gun thefts are alarming

because people cannot guarantee their weapon will not be stolen and used with mal-intent. Once a gun is stolen the likelihood of it being used in subsequent crime increases (Kessler & Kimbrough, 2002; Siebel, 2008; Siebel & Rostron, 2007).

Guns on campus hinder the university's ability to maintain a safe environment and there would be greater legal, financial, and public relations costs (Siebel, 2008). These implications are of great concern, especially because courts have established that schools are liable if they do not take appropriate steps to maintain a safe environment (Siebel & Rostron, 2007). However, it has taken some work to get to this point. Institutions of higher education historically took the position that they were not responsible for acts of violence (Hickey De Haven, 2009).

The courts supported this position and treated the institution as if it was an innocent bystander, and the students were unrelated adults (Hickey De Haven, 2009). However, this position changed in the 1980s when more cases were heard by juries, which began to focus and legitimate the notion of the college having a responsibility to protect against a "foreseeable risk" (Hickey De Haven, 2009). College and universities are considered to have a "special relationship" with their students. The concept of special relationship means these institutions are expected to commit to their students' safety and provide adequate security to ensure it. This concept is also known as the "duty of care" doctrine (Rasmussen & Johnson, 2008). If institutions neglect conditions which contribute to injury or criminal acts and ignore their responsibility to keep students safe, they can be held liable (Kaplin & Lee, 2007; Rasmussen & Johnson, 2008).

Officials at VT were criticized for neglecting their responsibility to see to their students' safety when they locked down their own doors but did not cancel class or warn

professors for hours after Cho's first two victims were found in their dormitories and hours before the rest of the attack commenced (Hickey De Haven, 2009). In March 2012, a jury agreed and found the university negligent for not alerting the campus of an imminent threat in a timely manner, and awarded damages to two families who initially filed the civil lawsuit (Lipka, 2012). Opponents of concealed carry contend campus-shooting incidents are seen as increasingly compelling academic phenomenon, and are therefore a foreseeable risk deserving of adequate detection and prevention (Hickey De Have, 2009).

Constitutional arguments. A central argument of the CCOC debate rests with the U.S. Constitution. Each side uses the "law of the land" to rationalize its right guaranteed by the First (opponents of concealed carry) or Second (proponents of concealed carry) Amendment. The Constitution is seen as outlining essential rights that cannot be overlooked by government or citizens in order to promote an alternate agenda. Although these rights cannot be contested as constitutionally protected, the argument rests in the interpretation of the wording of the Amendments. What follows are the constitutional arguments of each side, their interpretations, and the significance of the Supreme Court's role in interpreting these amendments.

Opponents of concealed carry argue that legalizing guns on campus is a violation of their First Amendment rights. They maintain that academic freedom is grounded in the First Amendment (Wyer, 2003), and that it supports the university's authority to regulate its campus (Wyer, 2003). Moreover, administrators contend they should be able to create reasonable rules for an orderly environment and uphold the academic mission of their institution (Janosik, 2005). The Supreme Court has weighed in on the issue, saying

academic freedom has always been a "special concern of the First Amendment" (*Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke*, 1978; Siebel & Rostron, 2007) and "Academic freedom thrives on uninhibited exchange of ideas among teachers and students… [and]…on autonomous decision-making…" (Kaplin & Lee, 2007; *Regents of Univ. of Mich. v. Ewing*, 1985; Siebel & Rostron, 2007). Opponents of CCOC argue that in light of these court decisions, a school's discretion to prohibit concealed carry should be respected (Siebel & Rostron, 2007).

As briefly mentioned earlier, concealed carry proponents believe that restrictions violate their Constitutional rights (Usborne, 2010). The Second Amendment states: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." The heart of the debate, then, rests on the interpretation of specifically whether the right to bear arms is a collective (the right of the State to arm militia) or individual right (Hock, 2009). Each side of the debate scrutinizes each word of this phrase and emphasizes particular words in an effort to interpret what the authors of the Second Amendment meant. Proponents of concealed carry contend that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual's right to be armed for self-defense, emphasizing "right of the people" as evidence (Hock, 2009). Opponents argue the Second Amendment grants the right to a collective body (the State) to bear arms via a regulated militia, emphasizing, "well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state" (Hock, 2009). Opponents further argue that the inability to definitively interpret the Second Amendment is ultimately the reason for the proliferation of millions of guns, which in turn leads to many injuries and killings each year (Rubin, 2007).

The Supreme Court's decision in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008) established a definitive precedent in the collective vs. individual right debate; favoring the individual's right to keep and bear arms (Lindeen, 2010). A 5-4 Supreme Court decision lifted a handgun ban in the District of Columbia which prohibited possession of operable handguns in the home, and declared the ban unconstitutional (Lindeen, 2010; Lund, 2009). With this decision, the Supreme Court took the opportunity to clarify this frequently disputed language (Lund, 2009). Whether this will have any impact regarding concealed carry policies on campus is unknown (Bouffard, Nobles, Well, & Cavanaugh, 2012).

Opponents of CCOC have some hope that the Heller case will not necessarily endanger their stance and that it will have broad implications for the individual versus collective debate and will possibly lead to challenges and the overturning of CCOC permits, i.e., that it will not undermine firearms restrictions in sensitive places (e.g., schools) (Craven, 2010; *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008). The Supreme Court held that the decision should not undermine these regulations because the Second Amendment is not unlimited (*District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008). It is the state courts that will ultimately provide the final decision on these challenges, and they will have to interpret how broadly to apply the Heller precedent as well as what constitutes a "sensitive place" (Craven, 2010; Lund, 2009).

In this section I examined studies on behaviors, characteristics, and location of students who own guns. The rationale generally mirrored the public. These studies permit a glimpse into how students interact with weapons. This section also highlighted many of the leading arguments and rationales for allowing or prohibiting CCOC. Many

of the arguments derive from national organizations; primarily the SCC and the Brady Campaign (Brian Seibel is a Senior Attorney for the Brady Campaign). Arguments on either side stem from the rationale that their stance will improve safety on campus. Although there is little empirical evidence regarding how campus constituents feel about the issue, the next section looks at some of the limited literature about constituents' opinions regarding CCOC.

Empirical Studies of Constituents' Reactions to Guns/Concealed Carry on Campus

Much of the previous literature incorporates arguments and rationale for and against concealed carry. Its basis is in assertions made from a range of statistics used to leverage arguments regarding benefits and benefits to safety, and constitutional interpretations. There is a smaller body of empirical literature that examines how campus constituents feel about the issue of CCOC. The following studies focus on those who attend class, live, and work at IHEs have reacted to concealed carry, and guns in general, on campus. At the end of this section I identify a gap in the literature, and the need for the current study.

In one study, conducted by Asmussen and Creswell (1995), reactions to an attempted shooting were recorded via interviews with campus constituents (students, administrators, campus police, staff, etc.). In this particular incident a gunman entered a classroom at a large public university and attempted to unload a thirty-round clip. The gun fortunately jammed and police quickly apprehended the gunman. A major theme emerged from the study – safety. Immediately following the incident administrators considered how to ensure their students' safety. The administrators recommended a new

policy on the safe storage of guns used by students for hunting. Asmussen and Creswell (1995) noted faculty senate, and faculty in general, were silent on the incident. Other steps were taken to ensure future safety, including establishing a new communication plan to deal with this specific emergency. Concealed carry was not directly mentioned in this study. However, the perspectives on guns and campus were examined after an attempted campus-shooting incident, and constituents indicated they wanted less access to weapons on their campus.

College and university counseling centers' perceptions of firearm guidance were studied by Price et al. (2009). Over 200 college counselors completed questionnaires for this study. The authors asked questions designed to find out if college counselors were discussing firearm issues with clients with mental health concerns. Findings of the study indicated the support that students who owned or had access to guns received from college counselors focused minimally on firearm safety; or substitutes for personal safety (Price et al., 2009). In fact, only 6% of respondents reported having these discussions with clients. This is interesting considering the counselors in this study admitted perceiving firearm issues as being greater with clients with mental health problems than with the general population (Price et al., 2009). This study has implications for the safety of constituents of IHE because college and university counselors reported there are indeed firearms issues for individuals with mental health problems. Moreover, these individuals do attend class and reside at IHE. Authors of the study concluded that counselors could actually be a factor in the reduction of firearm deaths (Price et al., 2009).

Campus police chiefs were the focus of another study by authors who studied campus counseling centers (Thompson et al., 2009). The authors were primarily interested in firearm-related violence on campus. More than 400 campus police chiefs completed questionnaires for this study. They were asked about their perceptions and practices related to reducing firearm violence on campus (Thompson et al., 2009). As a part of the study, the respondents were asked to weigh in on whether concealed firearms were effective measures in preventing campus killings; 86% disagreed that concealed carry firearms would prevent killings (Thompson et al., 2009). When asked whose role it was to minimize firearm violence, 81% of police chiefs indicated police officers should be taking the lead (Thompson et al., 2009). However, they indicated that administrators, faculty, and counselors should take responsibility to minimize firearm violence as well (Thompson et al., 2009).

Fallahi et al. (2009) surveyed students, faculty, and staff reactions three weeks after the VT shooting incident. Over 500 students, faculty, and staff took part in the study. One of their primary goals was to gather perceptions of school violence in general. Students believed a similar incident was likely to happen again. An interesting finding was that more students favored gun control after the incident than before (Fallahi et al., 2009). Moreover, students believed school violence was attributable to a lack of gun control, and therefore better gun control would help prevent this type of incident in the future (Fallahi et al., 2009). This is a unique finding, because groups such as the SCC were formed immediately following the incident with national agendas to expand gun rights.

One survey that focused on understanding student perceptions of safety initiatives provides rare data on student perceptions of CCOC. This survey was conducted during the 2009-2010 academic year, and collected data from more than 5,000 students. The authors wanted to know about students' perceptions of campus safety. Findings indicated students are not generally fearful of crime on campus (Burruss et al., 2010). A portion of the study examined students' attitudes toward CCOC. The survey data found students did not support carry concealed on campus, especially by other students (Burruss, et al., 2010). This finding is not surprising because students may not see the need to carry firearms if they do not fear criminal behavior. Furthermore, these students were satisfied with the performance and quality of their public safety office (Burruss et al., 2010).

In a master's thesis, Bosselait (2010) focused on three IHE and their responses to the VT campus-shooting incident. This study was qualitative in nature, and included interviews of administrators at these institutions: University of Pittsburg, James Madison University, and the University of South Carolina. A portion of this study included administrators' reactions to their own campus gun policies, as these policies became increasingly a topic of conversation after VT. The University of Pittsburg did not alter its no-guns campus policy, and was supported by the administrators in interviews. They said they had a strict policy regarding guns on campus. Administrators stated that if someone was seen carrying a weapon, s/he would be "taking a holiday" (Bosselait, 2010). Furthermore, discussions regarding new policy that would allow people to carry weapons were "not taken seriously." (Bosselait, 2010).

James Madison also did not alter its no-gun policy following the shooting. One administrator said the university's no-weapons policy was in place in order to maintain a

learning and working environment which is safe for constituents and visitors (Bosselait, 2010). Another administrator was adamant it would stay that way until the courts told them otherwise (Bosselait, 2010).

The University of South Carolina only changed its gun ban policy slightly after new legislation stated it must. The new legislation allowed permit holders to carry only in their vehicle's trunk or glove box. Administrators at the university were still against guns on campus at the time (other than for law enforcement officers) (Bosselait, 2010). The administrator further insisted more guns only lead to bad outcomes (Bosselait, 2010).

The previous studies addressed opinions/perspectives of campus constituents toward either guns or specifically CCOC. However, these authors only addressed these issues as part of their studies. This is to say, it was not the primary purpose of their investigation. The following studies make up the limited empirical research regarding how constituents feel about CCOC.

A survey that was conducted at Missouri State University (Springfield Campus) inquired about students' opinions of concealed carry (Brinker, 2008). This study was part of a sociology class project. Out of a sample of 1200 students, 313 completed a questionnaire designed to understand students' opinions of CCOC. One-third of the respondents favored faculty and staff carrying weapons (Brinker, 2008). However, students favored their fellow students carrying weapons to a lesser degree (Brinker, 2008). Those who favored guns on campus desired special training courses as a precondition, and a minimum age of 21 (Brinker, 2008). Female respondents as a group were less in favor of fellow students carrying weapons, and more in favor of giving that responsibility to campus security (Brinker, 2008).

Bouffard et al. (2012) offered a glimpse at how many undergraduate students would actually carry a concealed firearm if they were allowed. The authors of this study surveyed nearly 1,400 from 38 classrooms at one public institution in Texas. The number of classrooms is significant in this study because Bouffard et al. (2012) were trying to estimate the number of guns that might actually be in a classroom if permitted. The authors asked participants if they already possessed legal permits, and if not, would they acquire a legal permit if concealed carry were allowed on campus. Findings indicated that students would carry, and that there would be at least one firearm per classroom in the five sampled buildings involved in this study (Bouffard et al., 2012). The authors did state they could not draw conclusions as to whether these weapons would be used irresponsibly (e.g., in student suicides or homicides), or whether they would be able to deter or thwart a campus-shooting incident (Bouffard et al., 2012).

For a Master's thesis, a student studied the perceptions of concealed carry at the University of Texas at Arlington, specifically how students felt about fellow students, faculty, and non-security staff carrying such weapons (Van Winkle, 2010). Van Winkle stated that the significance of the study was on the importance to know how students feel about concealed carry because they are the ones directly affected. The researcher surveyed nearly 300 undergraduate and graduate students in criminal justice programs. This study also included demographic variables such as age and gender. Van Winkle's major conclusion was that students did not have strong agreement or disagreement toward CCOC. Also, there was no major significance between undergraduates and graduates agreeing or disagreeing. There was also no significance between males and females agreeing or disagreeing.

Van Winkle (2010) collected some qualitative data as a part of the study. These data were derived from an open-ended question at the end of the survey. This question asked participants if they had anything further they would like to share on students carrying firearms on campus. Of the 67 who responded to this question, 35 did not support students carrying handguns on campus, but 18 did. Fourteen neither agreed nor disagreed with the idea. This qualitative component shows some support that campus constituents use some of the same rationale for arguments for and against CCOC. The responses are explained below.

In the 35 responses that did not support the idea of students carrying handguns on campus, students stated it was a bad idea because of the high stress in a college campus environment (Van Winkle, 2010). Other responses said that these handguns would not make people safer (Van Winkle, 2010). The police were cited as the only group who should be allowed to carry handguns on campus because they were properly trained, and it is their job to handle emergencies, and concealed carry permit training is not meant for these situations (Van Winkle, 2010). Finally, students felt that first responders might have trouble telling the difference between a concealed carry permit holder trying to thwart an attack and the attacker himself (Van Winkle, 2010).

In the 18 responses supporting concealed carry handguns on campus, students stated that they should have the right to defend themselves (Van Winkle, 2010). These respondents said people who want to hurt others will bring their weapons whether they are allowed to or not, so students should be allowed to defend themselves (Van Winkle, 2010). Campus-shooting incidents, they reasoned, could have been avoided if students were allowed to carry (Van Winkle, 2010).

In the 14 responses that did not indicate a strong level of agreement or disagreement, students stated that allowing concealed carry was a difficult decision (Van Winkle, 2010). They also stated they thought people should be able to defend themselves, but were still worried that the handguns would create other issues (Van Winkle, 2010). Van Winkle (2010) stated that these respondents may not have had much agreement or disagreement in these responses because they may not have known much about the topic.

The above studies are examples of empirical research regarding how campus constituents' feel about firearms at IHE. Some of this literature does not address concealed carry specifically, but does address constituent attitudes towards guns on campus (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995; Fallahi et al., 2009; Price et al., 2009). Some of this literature does addresses CCOC as a part of a larger inquiry, but is helpful to understanding the issue from the perspective of those in the campus community (Bosselait, 2010; Burruss, et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2009). Bouffard et al., (2012), Brinker (2008), and Van Winkle (2010) produced studies focusing directly on concealed carry as the central component of their inquiries. Constituents in these studies were all students. These studies provided evidence that students had opinions both supportive and unsupportive of CCOC. Much of the data produced from all of these empirical studies are quantitative in nature.

Yet there are some qualitative data to help inform the discussion (i.e. Bosselait, 2010). However, in this case, only campus administrators were interviewed, and concealed carry was not the main focus of the study. Van Winkle (2010) also provided some qualitative evidence of how constituents feel about concealed carry, although it was

derived from one open-ended question at the end of a survey, and only sought the opinions of students. The qualitative data from this survey was significant in that it did show that constituents do have perspectives on this topic and are willing to share them.

The gap in the literature derives from the lack of in-depth qualitative data regarding constituents' perspectives on CCOC. More from the campus constituent perspective is needed regarding *why* they feel the way they do about CCOC. This type of data will contribute to the ongoing literature and discussion. Moreover, it can be informative for higher education administrators and assist them in offering support for constituents on their campus or informing policy. This is because they cannot assist this population unless they know more about how they feel.

The review of literature on the topic of concealed carry has provided much insight into the issue. It also provided insight regarding where new research would be valuable. It is apparent that concealed carry legislation and policy has changed in the recent years and months. This indicates the issue is relevant and current. Another indication that the literature provides for the need for more research is the abundance of arguments and rationale for and against allowing CCOC. Many of these arguments are supported by national groups (e.g., SCC and Brady Campaign). Furthermore, indications from the literature point to the lack of data regarding how those who reside, attend class, and work at IHEs feel about CCOC. A few studies have tapped the surface of the discussion. However, much can be gained from understanding further how campus constituents feel about concealed carry. There is a need for further inquiry yielding in-depth qualitative data. The purpose of this study is to understand how campus constituents make meaning of CCOC. The perspectives of those who are potentially impacted the most by it will

help inform the very administrators at IHE who could use these perspectives to help support their campus constituents should they find their campus instituting a supportive CCOC policy.

Researcher Perspective

Compiling and reading the literature on this topic was extremely helpful for me to gain further understanding and the surrounding issues. From the macro perspective of guns, crime, and rationales that exist at a national level, to the narrower scope of policy, perspectives, and beliefs happening at the campus level, the review of literature was a comprehensive examination of CCOC. There was much I learned throughout this process, which better prepared me for constructing a research design, and conducting data collection and analysis.

I believed I was learning a great deal about the issue. I was not only learning more about why I thought a certain way, but also how others came to differing perspectives. Finding out more information was extremely valuable in shaping what I believed the research design should be. Because I was learning much more about issue and expanding my scope of understanding, I began to wonder how others processed their beliefs on this issue. I was seeing little of this in the literature. I thought there was a lack of the perspective of those who this issue could affect the most. I also thought there was much to be gained by hearing and understanding these perspectives. For instance, how do they make meaning of this issue? That is to say, how do they come to their perspectives through experiences, contexts, and influences? Also, what sort of recommendations would they give to administrators that would make them think their beliefs were being acknowledged and supported?

I believed the purpose of this research project was a true inquiry in to how others, who like me spent a great deal of my time at an institution of higher education, grappled with this topic. I had not made up my mind about this topic, and was holding off doing so until I had heard more about, especially because I was finding it increasing harder to have a definitive opinion. However, I was wondering if a definitive position about this topic was really what I was searching for within myself. I wondered if others found themselves in a similar quandary. I wondered if I could learn how others processed the issues surrounding CCOC. To satisfy this inquiry, and to add to the existing literature, I embraced this curiosity and began a research design that would help me answer these questions. A qualitative case study was a compelling option because it would allow me to investigate the issue in an in-depth manner. I was excited to continue this journey, and proceeded to build a research design.

Chapter Summary

Concealed carry firearms on college campuses (CCOC) has been a much-debated topic since the Virginia Tech campus-shooting incident in 2007. The debate has maintained momentum since 2007, as campus continue to occur. This debate has moved to challenge policies and laws at institutions and in states, as the majority does not allow CCOC. Many of these challenges have been thwarted. However, some have been successful in passing legislation that now prohibits IHE from making policies to ban CCOC. Oregon, Wisconsin, Colorado, and Mississippi have been successful in changing their laws.

The main voices in the debate come from national organizations. Organizations that are opposed to CCOC are the Brady Campaign and Students for Gun Free Campuses

(SGFC). Organizations that support CCOC are the National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Students for Concealed Carry on Campus (SCC). These groups are significant contributors to the discussion. These groups use national statistics to infer rationale for their support or opposition to CCOC. These statistics are derived from general studies on guns, or from studies on college age populations and environments. Much of this empirical evidence is used in theoretical arguments for or against CCOC. However, there is little empirical evidence regarding what those who live on, or attend classes at an institution of higher education (IHE) think about the issue. Student, faculty, and student affairs practitioner perspectives should be considered when discussing the issue of CCOC.

There is a limited amount of empirical evidence showing these campus constituents' perspectives on CCOC. The few studies that yielded empirical data on how campus constituents feel about CCOC offered mostly quantitative data. Some of these studies focused on CCOC as a part of larger studies on campus safety, while other studies looked at CCOC on campus as the main focus of the study. These studies were helpful in giving a glimpse at whether students specifically support CCOC. However, the gap in the literature points a need to understand why campus constituents support or do not support CCOC, and not just students, but faculty, and student affairs practitioners too. The next chapter includes the paradigmatic framework, research methodology, methods, analysis, and criteria for rigor employed in this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I outline the research questions that guided this study. I also describe the paradigmatic framework and the elements of epistemology, axiology, and ontology with which it is associated. I then explain the study's methodology, as well as the accompanying research design including participants, setting, data collection, analysis, and trustworthiness. The purpose of this study was to understand how campus constituents make meaning of concealed carry firearms at an institution of higher education (IHE). To better understand these perspectives, the following research questions guided this study:

Q1: How do college students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners' perspectives influence how they make meaning of concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ1: What actual experiences have participants had with concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ2: What rationales do participants develop to support their stance for or against concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ3: What influences participants' rationales regarding concealed carry firearms on (CCOC)?

SQ4: How do participants feel university administrators can support their particular perspectives regarding concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

Paradigmatic Perspective

A paradigm is a way to view the world (Mertens, 2010). For the purpose of the study I used a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism allows researchers to understand knowledge from the perspective and context of those who live or experience it, and provides an avenue to share their interpretations (Mertens, 2010). Constructivists believe humans construct knowledge through sensory experiences, which are immediately given internal meanings (Stake, 1995). It is essential to understand the meaning given to experiences by individuals because it is impossible for knowledge to exist in the external world without human construction (Stake, 1995). The constructivist paradigm was especially useful within the context of this study because it was the understanding of how campus constituents make meaning of concealed carry firearms on campuses that was pursued. It was important to provide this avenue to participants to share their perspectives since they were provided little opportunity to contribute to the literature and to the overall discussion of the topic in the past.

Constructivist paradigms are employed when researchers are interested in understandings, experiences, and needs within a collegiate environment (Guido et al., 2010). This statement is especially helpful in understanding the appropriateness of using a constructivist paradigm within this study. The constructivist paradigm allowed me to appropriately address the research question because it was the diverse perspectives of college constituents, which were sought.

Constructivism is conducive to a case study methodology. The emphasis on multiple perspectives is valued in case study and constructivist research. Participants are chosen in a case study because they are most knowledgeable about the case and can

provide multiple perspectives of the case (Stake, 1995). The multiple perspectives of the cases will come from the multiple categories of campus constituents. Participants were from categories such as student, faculty, and student affairs practitioner.

The constructivist paradigm is accompanied by certain elements which further define the nature of the paradigm. The following elements of the constructivist paradigm will be discussed: epistemology, ontology, and axiology. These elements are integral to understanding constructivism, and helped to identify the research approach in this study.

Epistemology

Epistemology is a belief on how knowledge comes to be known by the knower (Mertens, 2010). Interaction between researcher and participant is essential to foster a relationship that allows the researcher to understand from where their participants' views originate (Mertens, 2010). Transactional knowledge is valued in constructivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Constructivism embraces a subjective approach to research because it is not possible to be objective with this type of interaction (Guido et al., 2010). This is to say that constructivists bring their own perceptions, values, and interpretations into the research. Subjectivity is embraced as a necessary component to the interactive relationship, in an effort for the researcher and participant to construct knowledge together. Within the constructivist paradigm, there is an emphasis on the importance of the personal nature of this interaction as being essential to understanding an individual's personal experiences (Alkove & McCarty, 1992). Interaction was essential in this study, and was integral to understanding the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding CCOC. Together with, and alongside, the participants, the meaning of concealed carry on a college campus which allows concealed carry was interpreted. I

embraced this approach because it assisted in the understanding of the phenomenon of concealed carry on college campuses by those who could describe it best.

Ontology

Through ontology, researchers wonder what the nature of reality is (Mertens, 2010). Constructivist's ontology emphasizes the notion of making meaning of existence through socially constructed knowledge. Moreover, socially constructed knowledge is gained through different experiences and contexts. No two people have the exact same experiences, thus their perceptions of knowledge are different. It was useful to consider many of these experiences to gain an in-depth perspective of concealed carry from those who attend, work, and live on campus. Since experiences and perceptions are unique to individuals, there can be no on universal truth (truth with a capital "T"). Instead truth with a small "t" represents truth based on individual experiences (Guido et al., 2010). It is the truth with a small "t" which was the focus of the study. Understanding campus constituents' perspectives and how they make meaning requires an awareness of their unique experiences and knowledge, as they understand it. Thus, it was important to seek out their individual truths about CCOC because these truths will help contribute to the discussion and debate.

Axiology

Through axiology, researchers address the nature of ethics in research. Within the constructivist paradigm are ethical standards emphasizing caring, social justice, and honoring the researcher/participant relationship (Mertens, 2010). These are achieved when researchers are aware of possible power and privilege differentials between researcher and participant (Mertens, 2010). Balance and fairness also plays a part in

constructivist axiology. These are achieved by ensuring all stakeholders are represented in the research process (Mertens, 2010). Constructivist axiology was followed in this study to ensure participants were treated fairly in their interactions with the researcher. I gave each participant informed consent document was given to each participant outlining what the study entailed and what was being asked of them. One section of the informed consent form let the participant know they could choose to opt out of the study at any time and for any reason. This was included to convey to the participant that they had control over their participation, and that they would be treated fairly.

A researcher/participant relationship was formed by fostering a climate in which the participants felt comfortable sharing their emotions. This was done by establishing rapport within conversation that included sharing my researcher perspective before the interview started. Participants also chose a comfortable place to them in which to conduct their interviews. These steps were essential to help preserve the ethical standards of constructivism.

Using the co-construction of knowledge that constructivists espouse also ensures balance between the researcher and the participant. Studies can employ an array of methodology and data collection methods that lend themselves to achieving knowledge co-construction in different ways. In this study, a case study methodology, and the data collection methods of one-on-one semi-structured interviews, document review, and researcher journal, allowed me to achieve adequate level of knowledge co-construction. Participants helped co-construct findings through member checking, at two different stages (between first and second interview, and after I had composed preliminary themes and findings). Participants were also able to co-construct knowledge with each other

within the second interview questions, as they each responded to themes from participants with differing perspectives. This served as an indirect conversation between participants. Finally, my researcher journal allowed me to reflect throughout the study about how I continued to make meaning of this issue, especially after interviews with participants.

Methodology: Case Study

In this study, I employed a qualitative case study methodology to understand campus constituent perspectives' on the CCOC phenomenon. Qualitative case study researchers search for meaning and understanding, with the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). This concept was observed in this study, as I conducted the interviews, document review, and data analysis. Moreover, this type of case study is ideal for researchers seeking greater understanding of the uniqueness and complexity of real cases and contemporary phenomenon in real contextual situations (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003). This was particularly why qualitative case study was appropriate for this study. There is a lack of empirical literature regarding the understanding of the CCOC phenomenon generally, and how campus constituents understand it specifically. Case studies should contribute to knowledge of an individual, group, or organization and the related phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The lack of literature on this subject is problematic since the constituents are directly affected by it. Therefore, the case study methodology was ideal for the examination of CCOC on a college campus (a real case) and how its campus constituents understood it in the context of their environment (real situations).

A definition of what a case study is, and how it informed the selection of the case in this study is provided next. A case study may be defined as an, "In-depth description and analysis of a bounded system." (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). A bounded system is bound by time and place, and individuals are studied within this time and place (Creswell, 1998). A case could be an individual, a program, a group, or an institution (Merriam, 2009). A single case study methodology allows for more in-depth analysis, while a multi-case study tends to dilute overall analysis because there tends to be a lack of depth of any single case within the multi-case study (Creswell, 1998). For the purposes of this study a single case design allowed the exploration of one case in more depth. The case, or bounded system, within this single case study was an institution of higher education. More information on the case can be found in the "Institutional Context" and "Participants" sections below.

According to Stake (1995) there are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. For the purposes of this study, an instrumental case study was most effective. Instrumental case studies are useful when the researcher wants to study a particular case, which will be instrumental in offering understanding about the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). In instrumental case studies, the issues of the case(s) are the dominant focus (Stake, 1995). Moreover, the case is not the primary interest and plays a supportive role in trying to understand something else (Stake, 2000). For the purposes of this study, the instrumental case study was employed to gain the perspectives of the students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners on a college campus. These individuals were the focus of this study. Because these populations are constituents of an IHE, it was reasonable to use an IHE as an instrumental case to gain

access to these populations' perspectives. Thus, the institution in the study played a supportive role in understanding constituents' perspectives.

Unit of Analysis

Determining the unit of analysis is essential when conducting case study research. The unit of analysis is derived from what characterizes the study, not from the topic of the inquiry (Merriam, 2009). To determine the unit of analysis, the researcher must first establish the study's research questions (Yin, 2003). Only after the research questions are specified can the unit of analysis be identified (Yin, 2003). Much in line with Yin, I derived the unit of analysis from the study's research question. The primary interest of the research question is to discover how campus constituents make meaning of conceal carry and its implications for their campus. For the purposes of this study the unit of analysis was the perspectives of students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners; as these perspectives are what characterized the study.

Institutional Context

Sampling is conducted at two levels in case study research. First, sampling happens at the case level, and then within the case (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling is generally the most common form of sampling at both levels (Merriam, 2009). Criteria must be established to guide the selection process (Merriam, 2009). For this study, purposeful criterion sampling was utilized to determine the case as well as those within the case. However, additional types of sampling were implemented within the case to further identify participants.

As stated above, purposeful criterion sampling was used to identify the case. Because the study's purpose was to uncover how campus constituents make meaning of

CCOC, the criterion for the case was a place where there are campus constituents. For this reason the "bounded system" in this study was Middle Pacific University (MPU) (a pseudonym). Middle Pacific University is a large four-year public, regional university. This university was chosen because it is an institution allowing concealed carry firearms. This was an optimal case because most higher education institutions do not allow concealed carry on their campuses. It was my assumption that constituents who live, work, and attend classes at an institution allowing concealed carry on its campus would have more to say about the topic than at an institution which does not allow concealed carry.

A review of institutional documents such as the school newspaper, meeting minutes from the Board of Regents and Student Government, and campus policies, were useful in understanding campus constituents' rationales for their support or non-support for CCOC. These viewpoints were similar to those of the participants of this study. The similarities in responses ensured between-method triangulation, and that the data is being strengthened among multiple data collection methods. These documents also provided institutional context for the case being studied – MPU.

Individuals at MPU are allowed to carry concealed firearms on campus if they have a lawful permit issued by the state. Exceptions to the policy state that individuals may not carry in residence halls, MPU apartments, dining facilities, and the health center. Those living in residence halls, or any one else, can store their firearms with the MPU police department. Institutional documents were helpful in understanding MPU's history with CCOC. Articles in the school newspaper, Student Government meeting minutes, and Board of Trustees meeting minutes detailed MPU's past actions regarding CCOC.

The Faculty Senate, President of the university, and the Board of Trustees attempted to pass a policy banning CCOC. These entities believed they would be in a safer environment without CCOC. However, this was met with threats of lawsuits by supporters of CCOC. The Board of Trustees eventually revoked its short-lived gun ban in order to be in compliance with state law. Due to the residence hall policies, MPU does not allow firearms in their residence halls and students must sign a waiver to live there. However, a debate about whether to allow firearms owners to live in separate residence halls has come up recently. This is viewed by some as a way to find the middle ground in the CCOC discussion. Others feel this suggestion is segregationist and violates the Second Amendment rights.

The student newspaper was useful in understanding the viewpoints of constituents regarding CCOC. Information was contained in editorials by staff writers, letters to the editor, and constituent sentiments conveyed to staff reporters. Constituents opposed to CCOC argued that innocent bystanders could be harmed. Supporters of CCOC admitted to the possibility, but thought this was a risk that was low compared to the alternative of a shooter being able to inflict as much harm as possible until their ammunition runs out. They also spoke about the importance of observing the rights of law-abiding citizens for self-protection. They stated that they needed this right because others, who are not law-abiding, will obtain weapons and do harm regardless of what the law tells them.

Some constituents that were opposed to CCOC did support the Second Amendment, but believed that guns on campus were too risky and that accidental shootings would occur. Others said the Second Amendment is being misinterpreted by

supporters of gun rights and CCOC, and that it was never intended for an individual right to carry firearms, but rather for a the collective right of a state militia.

Defensive gun stops were also used as rationale in one of these articles. The author wrote about incidents where licensed concealed carry permit holders had stopped active shooters. Non-supporters of CCOC, however, did not think that CCOC would be effective in deterring potential school shooters. One author took exception to this, saying deterrence is a secondary benefit, and the first benefit is being able to respond to the threat effectively. Another author did think that CCOC would be effective in deterring crime because it will make the criminal think twice. Some supporters of CCOC noted that concealed carry levels the playing fields and is empowering.

Non-supporters of CCOC also said that CCOC was disruptive to the educational mission, created an environment of fear, and that guns are not the answer. These constituents feel that safety can be addressed in other ways, such as putting an emphasis on getting people the mental health support they need. Supporters of CCOC thought this rationale was without sound reasoning. They argued that an 18-year-old could be sent to fight and die for their country, and that banning a licensed 21-year-old from carrying on campus was an inadequate justification. Supporters of CCOC believed that there are adequate background checks and training that are required in obtaining a concealed carry firearms permit. One constituent shared that she was a supporter. She noted that she was raised in a family of hunters, and was quite familiar with the gun range.

The context provided in this section is necessary to understanding some of the data provided in Chapter IV. Many of the rationales in within these documents were also

demonstrated by participant interviews. These documents are important to strengthen the findings in the following chapter and helped ensure between-method triangulation.

Participants

I invited participants from three campus populations to participate in the study including students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners. I identified participants through purposeful criterion sampling, reverse snowball sampling, and maximum variation sampling. These sampling techniques ensured that I obtained multiple perspectives from the institution, and from participants who were willing to speak about concealed carry issues on college campuses. The sampling procedures are outlined below.

First, participants must have met the criterion of the case or "bounded system", which is to be a constituent from one of these categories at MPU. Next, some participants were purposefully sampled (Creswell, 1998) meaning they were identified by myself and a committee member. I selected one of my dissertation committee members because she was familiar with members at MPU and knew people who may be familiar with, and want to talk about, the issue of CCOC. Third, at the request of the institution, reverse snowball sampling was employed to identify further constituents. Traditionally, snowball sampling involves asking participants to refer other participants to the researcher who may be interested in the study, and then the researcher would contact the interested person (Merriam, 2009). In this case, and because of MPU's request, I embraced a reverse snowball sampling method and asked participants and others to give my information to other people and have them contact me if they were interested in the study. Those interested then contacted me. Finally, maximum variation sampling is

preferred in case study because it fully displays multiple perspectives about the case (Creswell, 1998). In this case, maximum variation was employed by choosing members from a range of constituent categories (student, faculty, and students affairs practitioner) in an attempt to provide multiple perspectives of the case. Including multiple groups in the study helped ensure data source triangulation. Participants were invited to take part in the study via an email greeting introducing myself and the study.

Fifteen campus constituents were interviewed over seven months. Four participants were students, six were faculty/instructors, and five were student affairs practitioners. Two rounds of interviews were conducted with the first ten participants. It took five months to identify these initial participants. For the sake of time, once each one of the remaining five participants was identified, I conducted both interviews at the same time. This resulted in 25 total interviews transcripts. The interview process is discussed in detail in the "Data Collection" section. The following table provides a brief illustration guide with participants' information and is a useful reference while reading the findings in Chapter IV.

Table 2

List of Participants

Name	Category	Gender	CCOC Stance	Permit Holder
Adam	Student Affairs	Male	Unsupportive	No
Alyssa	Grad. Student	Female	Supportive	Yes
Amy	Student Affairs	Female	Unsupportive	No
Bob	Faculty	Male	Unsupportive	No
Cliff	Faculty	Male	Unsupportive	No
Dave	Faculty	Male	Unsupportive	No
Doc	Instructor	Male	Supportive	Yes
Elizabeth	Student	Female	Supportive	No
Fred	Student Affairs	Male	Unsupportive	No
James	Student	Male	Supportive	Yes
Kent	Instructor	Male	Supportive	Yes
Martina	Student Affairs	Female	Unsupportive	No
Sean	Faculty	Male	Supportive	No
Steele	Student Affairs	Male	Unsupportive	No
Stella	Students	Female	Supportive	No

Saturation. While it was important for data triangulation to collect data from a range of participants, and to the constructivist paradigm to understand diverse perspectives and experiences, ultimately, the size of the total sample of this case was determined when I reached saturation of themes. A researcher is justified to stop sampling once themes or categories have been saturated (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). This means that once a researcher begins to hear the same sort of information from participants, or read in documents redundant information, they may have reached saturation (Jones et al., 2006). I sampled and invited participants to take part in the study until I reached saturation. Saturation also guided the document review data collection method, as I read enough documents until I reached saturation of themes.

Data Collection

Given the holistic nature of case study, any and all data collection methods may be employed, and it is up to the researcher to make decisions about which methods may be most appropriate for their study (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000). I chose one-on-one interviews, document review, and a researcher journal as methods in this qualitative case study. Employing these three methods ensured that between-method triangulation is observed. Three methods will suffice since between-method triangulation requires at least two methods of data collection (Denzin, 1989). Also, I submitted a proposal of this study to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and it was approved prior to collecting data.

Interviewing

Interviewing is an effective technique when conducting case studies (Merriam, 2009). Interviews allow the participants and the researcher to have a conversation where we can elicit information from one another (Merriam, 2009). Interviewing is especially important in case study because the two principal purposes are to elicit descriptions and interpretations from participants (Stake, 1995). Qualitative researchers strive to depict multiple views of a case, and the interview is the primary avenue to achieve those means (Stake, 1995). Within this study, interviews allowed for open-ended questions, and fostered conversation. This allowed participants to share their unique views and interpretations of CCOC. The semi-structured format is useful because they will allow flexibility, so the researcher can respond more fluidly based on new topical ideas the participant touched upon (Merriam, 2009). This was helpful in interviews with participants, as many times participants brought up new ideas. I was able to ask follow-

up questions for clarification, or to further develop a response. Interviews were conducted in-person and in a setting chosen by the participant. Many participants chose their office or a common space such as a coffee shop.

During each participant's first interview, I shared my perspective as a researcher in an effort to help them understand how I made meaning of CCOC. This was done at the beginning of the interview, before I began to ask the interview questions. This helped to build rapport, and to be open about my perspective on the topic. Next, I asked questions designed to elicit interpretations and experiences that contribute to how the participants make meaning of concealed carry firearms on a campus of higher education. Questions from the first interview are as follows:

1. What are your thoughts about concealed carry on campus?
2. Are you aware of the campus's policy on concealed carry firearms?
3. Tell me how specific incidents/experiences have influenced your beliefs.
4. How have your beliefs about concealed carry on campus evolved or changed over time?
5. How do you feel concealed carry on campuses differs from concealed carry off campus?
6. What do you see as the risks and the benefits of concealed carry on campus?
7. Would you feel safer if you knew a fellow student or faculty member were carrying a concealed firearm in the classroom? Why or why not?
8. Have you known someone who has carried concealed on your campus?

9. Would you carry concealed on campus? Why or why not?

The second interview provided an opportunity to follow-up with participants and to have a more in-depth conversation about concealed carry. The second interview had three purposes. First, it served as a member check. This allowed participants to reflect on what they shared in the first interview. Second, it was a chance to see how themes from the first round influenced their meaning making. Third, the follow-up interview provided a space where participants could expand on their feelings about CCOC by responding to questions designed from themes emerging from the first round of interviews.

The second interview began with a request for participants to reflect on their first interview. After this reflection, I shared themes that were derived from first round of interviews. I asked participants to respond to these themes with an opposing perspective. Interviews of participants who were supportive of CCOC elicited these themes:

1. Safety (Defense, Deterrence, Equalizer).
2. Rights of law-abiding citizens.
3. Evolution of their stance through family and cultural influences.
4. Less restrictive permit process.
5. Benefits of CCOC outweigh the risks.

Interviews of participants who were unsupportive of CCOC elicited these themes:

1. Mental Health.
2. Populations on campus.
3. Training for concealed carry permit.

4. Risky behavior (Alcohol, drugs, and partying).
5. CCOC not conducive to the mission of IHE.

After this, I asked the second interview questions, which were informed from the first round of interviews:

1. Has your perspective regarding CCOC changed/evolved based on recent events (that happened between many of the participant's first and second interviews) (Oregon Mall shooting, Sandy Hook, etc.)? Why or why not?
2. How do you feel the institution has approached and handled concealed carry on this campus?
3. Is there anything the institution could be doing to support your feelings?
4. How did MPU being an institution that allows concealed carry influence your decision to work/attend the institution?

For the last five participants, I was able to condense the two interviews into one session. I began the interviews with the same rapport-building exercise of sharing my researcher perspective, and we reviewed their answers to the first-interview questions in order to member-check. They were able to respond to the same themes, and answer the same second-interview questions as the other participants.

Although Merriam (2009) asserts interviewing a useful technique for data collection within a case study, other sources of data collection are necessary for triangulation (Denzin, 1989). Document review was the other source of data collection. It was invaluable in ensuring between-method triangulation. Next, information will be discussed regarding how document review was used in this study.

Document Review

Case studies generally have some need for examining documents such as newspapers, reports, records, correspondence, etc. (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Documents are helpful in corroborating evidence from other sources (Yin, 2003). I examined documents in order to get a better sense of constituents' views CCOC. Examining documents helped strengthen what I heard about CCOC in the interviews with participants. The campus's school newspaper, Student Government and Board of Regents meeting minutes, and campus policies gave further insight about campus constituents' beliefs about concealed carry. These documents were reviewed by searching for pertinent information within the documents regarding concealed carry at MPU. Information from these sources is presented within Chapter IV.

Researcher Journal

Researchers conducting a constructivist study must embrace their own values as a part of their role as researcher (Mertens, 2010). As I stated in the researcher perspective, I have had wrestled with how I make meaning of CCOC. I stated my previous stances of how I initially thought firearms on campus was an ill-advised idea. However, I began to challenge myself to understand other perspectives on the topic. I did this through research and discussions on the topic. This purpose of this study is to further examine others' perspectives on CCOC. I wanted to know how they make meaning of this issue. However, I needed to continue to document how my meaning making continued to be influenced throughout this process. A researcher journal can be used to document new thoughts, ideas, and experiences in an effort inform the researcher's growth in the process (Linder, 2011). It is through a researcher journal that I intended to document my

thoughts, ideas, and experiences as they influenced my growth in making meaning of CCOC. My journal contained reflections of interviews with participants, the documents I interacted with, and what was going on in the national landscape (e.g., new shooting incidents, and laws and policy changes). Journal information was used to inform periodic installments of my researcher perspective contained in Chapters I, II, IV, and V.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is necessary to answer a study's research questions (Merriam, 2009). Data analysis is the process of making meaning of the data, and these meanings or insights are what constitute the findings of a study (Merriam, 2009). The search for meaning generally rests in the search for patterns in case studies (Stake, 1995). Merriam (2009) refers to patterns and themes as category construction. To construct categories, a researcher sorts data using a deductive, two-level coding system; open and axial coding (Merriam, 2009). Within this study, interviews were transcribed, and transcripts were thoroughly analyzed for emerging patterns and themes. Documents and my researcher journal were also reviewed for emerging themes. I used the concepts of open and axial coding to identify these themes by carefully analyzing transcripts and documents line by line. Open coding was employed first in order to identify themes relevant to the study. Axial coding was conducted subsequently to establish relations between the identified themes. Both common and dissimilar themes illustrating the most salient constituent perspectives are compiled in Chapter IV.

Criteria for Rigor

Triangulation

Qualitative case study researchers have a general concern that their study has it right. There are processes to help ensure the researcher will "get it right" when analyzing and presenting data. One of these processes is referred to as triangulation (Stake, 1995). The purpose of triangulation is to portray the case in a way that anyone else who researched it would have recorded it in a similar manner (Stake, 1995). This is to say that they want to make sure they have conveyed an accurate description of their case (Stake, 1995). Triangulation uses a combination of multiple methods to overcome deficiencies of a single method (Denzin, 1989).

Two types of triangulation were employed in this study. The first type was data triangulation. Data triangulation is when researchers use different data sources to see if phenomenon remains the same in other places, times, or interactions (Denzin, 1989; Stake, 1995). Moreover, the goal of using data triangulation is to see if what the researcher is observing and reporting carries similar meaning in other circumstances (Stake, 1995). Data triangulation was observed in this study by selecting different data sources. These different sources of data were comprised of different campus constituents (i.e. students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners). These data sources are distinguishable from methods of generating data (Denzin, 1989). Methods of generating data consist of another type of triangulation. This particular type will be discussed next.

The second type of triangulation employed by this study was methodological or between-method triangulation (Denzin, 1989; Stake, 1995). Between-method triangulation is the combination of two or more research methods in a study (Denzin,

1989). This type of triangulation will help bolster confidence in interpretations of the data (Stake, 1995). This confidence comes in knowing that flaws in one data collection method may be ameliorated by another (Denzin, 1989). Interviews, document review, and a researcher journal are the data collection methods within this study. Interpretations gathered by each data collection method were strengthened by the others. Both of these triangulation strategies assisted in portraying an accurate interpretation of how participants and constituents view CCOC.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is essential for ensuring the proper rigor in a qualitative study. Trustworthiness is necessary to establish whether a study does what it has been designed to do (Merriam, 1995). The main tenets of trustworthiness in qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). How these tenets are used in to ensure trustworthiness, as well as how they were used within this study, are described below.

Credibility happens when a researcher's findings are credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is to say that the findings of the study represent what was really there (Merriam, 2009). Member checking is one way to ensure the credibility of a study. Member checking means those who produce the knowledge in the interviews have a chance to let the researcher know if preliminary interpretations of the data are adequate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Participants in this study had an opportunity to review responses to interview questions, preliminary themes, and findings before the final write-up to ensure I interpreted their words and insights accurately.

Transferability is the ability of the results to hold in another context, or in the same context at another time, and will allow others to make conclusions about whether the results can transfer to their context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The techniques which will be used to ensure transferability will be to use thick, rich description and maximum variation (Merriam, 2009). "Thick description" is beneficial in constructivist research. The term means the researcher attempts to communicate the experiences of the participants accurately, and elicit empathetic notions from the reader toward the participants (Stake, 1995). Thick, rich description was achieved by using direct quotes from participants in this study. Poland (2002) stated that there is often a need to tidy quotes because people talk in run-on sentences. Judgments must be made on where to begin and end sentences while not changing the meaning of what a participant said (Poland, 2002). Quotes from participants were cleaned up in order to make them easier to read. Quotes that I made an effort to "tidy" up were read and re-read many times to help ensure I was not altering the meaning of participants' words. Maximum variation was utilized by sampling participants from a range of constituents on campus (students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners); this allowed for "greater range of application by readers or consumers of the research" (Merriam, 2009, p.227).

Dependability determines whether the results of the study are consistent with the data (Merriam, 1995). Within this study the technique of peer examination was used to ensure the study was dependable. Peer reviewers are sought out to assist the researcher's effort to interpret the data correctly, and that they formulate plausible themes consistent with the data (Merriam). I used a fellow student in my doctoral program with experience in peer review. The reviewer examined some raw data and preliminary findings. We

discussed what the reviewer made from the data and findings, and how it related to themes I hade developed.

Finally, confirmability means the researcher's bias or judgment is minimized, and data is from participants not from something the researcher conjured (Mertens, 2010). The technique used to ensure confimability in this study was an audit trail. An audit trail was used to trace data to its original source and confirm the process of interpreting the data (Mertens, 2010). I used the audit trail to trace data to its source, giving rationale to interpretations and to the development of themes.

Chapter Summary

The constructivist paradigm was useful in understanding the importance of learning how others view the world through the context of their lived experiences, and the meaning and interpretation the give to those experiences. In trying to understand constituents' experiences and perspectives in was important to use pertinent data collection techniques. These perspectives were gained through data collection methods such as one-on-one semi structured interviews (two per participant) and document review (reviewing institutional documents), which yielded qualitative data. A case study methodology was chosen in an effort to understand campus constituent perspectives on CCOC with an IHE that allows CCOC as the case. This case was chosen as its campus constituents should be more familiar with the issue and have more experiences to share. The pseudonym for the case was Middle Pacific University (MPU).

Participants were chosen through purposeful, criterion, maximum variation, and reverse snowball sampling techniques. This meant that participants were chosen purposefully by fulfilling the criterion of being either a student, faculty member, or

student affairs practitioner at MPU. Participants provided a range of perspectives by being from one of these three groups and thus a maximum variation of participants was achieved. Finally, reverse snowball sampling was used to identify participants by having the initial participant refer my name and study to others they knew who would be appropriate for participation in the study. A total of fifteen participants, four students, five student affairs practitioners, and six faculty/instructors where eventually chosen for the study.

Data collection techniques included two one-on-one semi-structured interviews and review of institutional documents. Interviews were separated into two interviews sessions for most participants. Some were conducted at the same time for the sake of time. The first interviews lasted roughly 60 minutes and included nine questions. The second interview's purpose was as a follow-up interview. The second interview contained questions that I derived from themes from the first interview. Five themes from those who supported CCOC, and five themes from those who did not support CCOC were identified. In the second interview, participants were asked to respond to themes from the opposing perspective in an effort create more understanding about participant rationales. Other questions were also asked in the second interview that would give further insight into participant perspectives. The final purpose of the second interview was to serve as a member checking technique to help ensure credibility.

Institutional documents were reviewed and were used to help gain perspectives of campus constituents on CCOC and help understand the institutional context. Document review was important to use as another form of data collection to help ensure criteria for

rigor such as trustworthiness and triangulation. The school newspaper, meeting minutes from the Board of Regents and Student Government, and campus policies were reviewed.

Data analysis consisted of using coding techniques to create themes from interview and document data. After interviews were transcribed they were analyzed using open and axial coding. The codes were then complied into themes, and the themes were organized in a way that helped inform the research study's research questions. Documents were also analyzed, and had supplemental data that contributed to the overall themes derived from the interviews. Triangulation and trustworthiness were two techniques used to ensure rigor. The next chapter includes findings from interview data, and organized into themes.

CHAPTER IV

THEMES

In this chapter, I present the research findings organized by four themes: 1) The Impact of the Middle Pacific University (MPU) Concealed Carry Policy on Participants; 2) Participants' Rationales for Stances on Conceal Carry on Campus (CCOC); 3) Influences on Participants Perspectives on CCOC; and, 4) Participant Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future of CCOC at MPU. These themes emerged from the data and helped me explore the study's four sub-research questions. The data will ultimately be interpreted in relation to the study's main research question in Chapter V. In order to navigate the data and themes presented in this section, I present a brief profile for each participant and expand on the information provided in Table 2 in Chapter III. These profiles provide further context to the following findings.

Participant Profiles

Adam

Adam is a student affairs practitioner and is unsupportive of CCOC. Adam was influenced by seeing firearms used for violence as a child and young adult in a large urban coastal city. He feels uncomfortable knowing others are carrying on campus, and could negatively impact the campus community because it could be alarming to those who do not carry. Adam was especially concerned about the inevitable risks that come with allowing firearms on campus.

Amy

Amy is a student affairs practitioner. She is a supporter of constitutional rights, and including the second amendment. However, she is not sure what to think about CCOC on a university campus. She believes a college environment is important for student's learning and ability to have new experiences. Being supportive of her students is important to her. Amy finds herself caught between support for others constitutional rights and not feeling personally comfortable with having firearms around her.

Bob

Bob is a faculty member and is unsupportive of CCOC. Bob grew up around guns, and supports the use of them for hunting and by trained law enforcement officers. However, he thought a college campus is not the type of environment for firearms. His opinion was influenced by his own experiences with risky behavior in college. He remembered using alcohol in college and not always making good decisions as a result. Bob worried about allowing firearms in this type of environment.

Cliff

Cliff is a faculty member and is unsupportive of CCOC. He grew up around firearms. His father was an FBI agent and they would practice shooting many types of firearms together. Cliff has since become adverse to firearms, and even the Second Amendment. He does not see the value they bring to people, and thinks the process to obtain a firearm should be more rigorous than it is currently. He is also concerned about the risks CCOC pose within his duties as a faculty member. Much like Dave, he has to have difficult conversations with students and worries about the implications of what that means in the context of CCOC.

Dave

Dave is a faculty member and is unsupportive of CCOC. Dave's main concern as a faculty member is having to deal with already difficult situations in his position (i.e. failing a student, evaluating other faculty), which adding a firearm to the equation could escalate the situation to volatile. Dave thought it was especially risky allowing CCOC because college campuses have large numbers of young people away from home for the first time, with not much experience with interpersonal conflict, and who may be experimenting with alcohol and drugs.

Doc

Doc is a faculty member and is supportive of CCOC. He has a concealed carry permit, and carries because it is his constitutional right to defend himself. Firearms and hunting were a part of the culture he grew up in, even recalling firearm safety being a part of one of his classes. Doc believes a firearm is the most appropriate self-defense measure and levels the playing field when faced with a life-and-death scenario.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is an undergraduate student. She is supportive of CCOC, although she does not have a concealed carry permit. Elizabeth is supportive of CCOC because it is allowed by the state constitution, and it is an adequate measure of self-defense. She had an experience on campus that put her personal safety into perspective, and helped develop her stance on CCOC. Elizabeth is not only a supporter of CCOC; she has become an advocate on campus.

Fred

Fred is a student affairs practitioner and is unsupportive of CCOC. Fred grew up around hunting and guns, but is uncomfortable with the CCOC. He is concerned about the risks it may pose to the community, because he has been influenced by the bad things he has seen happen with guns. Fred's main concern is that many who carry have not been trained or prepared enough to respond appropriately in a combative situation. He thinks there is a potential to cause more harm than good.

James

James is an undergraduate student, and in his last year. He supports CCOC and has a concealed carry permit. He is well versed in both campus and off-campus concealed carry polices and laws. James makes a point to know where and when he may carry a firearm. He believes it is important that the state constitution be observed in campus policies and is frustrated at the exceptions to the CCOC policy at MPU (i.e. not permitted in residence halls, dining halls, the student health center). James's primary reason for carrying is self-defense.

Kent and Alyssa

Kent and Alyssa are a married couple who interviewed together. They both support CCOC, and were influenced significantly to become affiliated with MPU because it allows concealed carry firearms. Kent is an instructor, and Alyssa is a graduate student at MPU. They both attended Virginia Tech during the 2007 campus shooting. They both lost friends and were deeply influenced to become CCOC advocates as a result. Both have concealed carry permits.

Martina

Martina is a student affairs practitioner and has mixed feelings on the issue. She is not a permit holder but wants to be respectful of constitutional rights and the values of others, and even could foresee the benefit of a permit holder helping to thwart a campus-shooting incident. However, she generally felt uncomfortable with firearms on campus. Her influences stem from being raised to think that guns were conducive to violence. However, she is more compassionate toward those who value guns because she has gotten to know and made friends with many who own guns and have concealed carry permits.

Sean

Sean is a faculty member and is supportive of CCOC. Like Stella and Elizabeth, Sean is a supporter of CCOC but does not have a permit to carry a firearm. Having graduated from Virginia Tech and still having colleagues there, Sean was influenced by the 2007 campus-shooting. He believes gun-free zones are only dangerous for law-abiding citizens. Sean does not own a firearm, nor does he have an interest in ever owning one. However, he feels safer knowing permit holders are on campus and could potentially thwart a campus-shooting incident.

Steele

Steele is a student affairs practitioner and does not support CCOC because of experiences he had in his personal and professional life. He does make a point to say he supports different cultures that may value firearms, and the law that allows people to own and carry firearms. However, he does not believe they are appropriate on campus because of the many risks he thinks CCOC poses. Steele believes CCOC “heightens” the

environment on campus, and factors into many decisions administrators have to make on a permissive concealed carry campus.

Stella

Stella is an undergraduate senior and is supportive of CCOC. She supports constitutional rights, especially the Second Amendment and is confident that the right extends to the university environment. Her father is a former police officer.

The Impact of the Concealed Carry Policy on Participants

Participant perspectives on Middle Pacific University's (MPU) policy include their level of awareness of the policy, whether they carry a concealed weapon and their reasons, if they know others who have carried a concealed weapon, and if this has any influence on why they work or attend MPU. The data I collected helps us to understand the actual experiences campus constituents have with conceal carry on campus. The following section explores these participants' perspectives as they shared them through my interviews.

Campus Policy

As stated in the Institutional Context section of Chapter III, individuals at MPU are allowed to carry concealed firearms on campus if they have a lawful permit issued by the state. Exceptions to the policy state that individuals may not carry in residence halls, MPU apartments, dining facilities, and the health center. Those living in residence halls, or any one else, can store their firearms with the MPU police department.

Participants with a depth of knowledge of the campus policy. Although many participants knew that MPU allows CCOC, some were more familiar with the policy than others. Participants who were more aware of the policy tended to be employees of the

institution having duties inherent in knowing the policy; or, were individuals in possession of concealed carry permits who felt responsible to learn and observe the policy. Participants who were not as aware of the nuances in the policy did not deal with it on a frequent basis.

James knew the policy in detail. When asked if he was aware of MPU's policy, his response was, "Their policy has been…not to explicitly state a policy on concealed carry other than that they…the campus allows whatever is legally allowed [in the state]." James went on to speak further about specifics of the policy:

> They provide weapon storage at the police department…but nobody is required to actually put something there. The dorm, the residence life, will tell you [that] alongside the statement that weapons are completely prohibited in those facilities, they usually mention the MPU PD will store firearms for you. But there is no requirement to store a firearm there, and there's no requirement to register or notify. The health network, which includes what is basically the student clinic and various other health-related services that are offered on campus, has a policy that they require everybody...as far as I understand all people...the next time people come in for appointment...will be given this statement of these policies. And at the end of the statement...it's like three pages longs...it explicitly cites the [state] law and says by using our services you explicitly waive your rights.

Steele also knew the policy well and largely attributed that knowledge due to the position he holds at the university. He shared:

> Although, [even] if you go through the process of getting a permit, you still can't have it in our residence halls. That's pretty much the only place [you can't have it] even if you have the permit. We can't say, "No, you cannot."

Some participants who carry spoke about the importance of knowing the concealed carry policy anywhere they planned to carry. Knowing this was part of being a responsible concealed carrier and complying with the law. James stressed why he believed it was important to know the concealed carry policy, "It's important to know, because in my experience a lot of times campus police officers, and officers in other

jurisdictions around campus, will have their own misconceptions about MPU policy...and what even the [state] law says."

Much like James, Kent and Alyssa believe it is their responsibility to know the policy as law-abiding citizens. Kent said, "Yeah, since I do exercise my right, I'm completely aware of it." Alyssa also spoke of the importance of understanding the policies in order to remain in compliance and to be law-abiding citizens. Alyssa shared her reasoning for the importance of knowing the policy:

> I think that's one of the things we found from all of the work we've done is that [because] the policies, and the statutes, and whatever the laws are, vary so much from state to state and from institution to institution that we just kind of made it a mission of ours to become familiar with the language and the process, because if you miss a step in there somewhere, you can get in big trouble for it.

Participants knowing the campus policy in general terms. Other participants generally knew the policy allowed firearms and it provided a few exceptions. Elizabeth knew about the storage service the campus police department offered, but thought of them as storage for hunting rifles, not necessarily pistols. She spoke of her experience in the residence hall, "I do know if you were a gun owner, and maybe you like to go shooting out on weekends like out in the mountains or something, [you can] hold your guns at the MPU police department."

Martina recently became aware that she misunderstood the policy. She shared what she assumed the policy was, but found out differently during the short period when the ban of concealed carry on MPU's campus was being considered:

> For some reason, I just thought it wasn't allowed for students to do that because in my eyes it seems a little outrageous that students should be able to carry weapons around campus. Then I found out it's totally fine if you have a permit. So, yes I am [now] aware of the policy that students can carry weapons.

Fred admitted to not knowing much about the campus policy, other than knowing the basic premise that concealed carry is allowed on campus. Fred said, “I know you can carry at the University that I am currently employed at. Beyond that, I mean specifics, I’m not going to lie to you, I don't really know.”

Amy knew the general policy, and was somewhat familiar with some of its nuances as well. Specifically, the involvement the campus police have with securing weapons:

> I know that we allow them, [and] that we are one of a handful of states that allow it. I know that. Yes, I know you can have it on campus if you got the permit. I know that even our campus police station allows for if you don't have a safe place, you can go and store it [firearm] at the police station and then check it out.

Dave knew the general policy and that there was an exception for residence halls, saying, “My understanding of the campus policy is that concealed weapons are permitted everywhere on campus except for residence halls and dining halls.”

As shown above, participants had varying knowledge of MPU’s policy. Many permit holders put considerable time and care into understanding the policy, including its exceptions, because it was important to them to be in compliance and to be responsible law-abiding citizens. They made a point to understand the concealed carry policy and the law in each environment they encounter. I was impressed by how conscientious and thoughtful these participants are about the responsibility associated with CCOC. The other participants, who were unaware of MPU’s policy to allow concealed carry on its campus, probably did not know because it was of little interest to them. It had less importance in their lives than those who wanted to carry.

Based on the interviews, it is also apparent that MPU’s administration has not made the campus community aware of the policy details to the extent to which

constituents would know its parameters, or even to the existence of one at all. There is little evidence of a campus conversation occurring when the Faculty Senate and Administration considered banning CCOC. According to the student newspaper, the attempt to ban CCOC was short lived, as imminent lawsuits were threatened claiming a ban would violate the state constitution.

Decisions to Carry or Refrain from Carry on Campus

To better understand the participants' perspectives and beliefs about CCOC, I was interested in learning about their experiences with CCOC. In this section I explore participants' experiences of carrying concealed, or knowing others who conceal carry. I also examine perspective on what compels a participant's choice to carry. Middle Pacific University's unique CCOC policy is viewed as influencing some participants to become affiliated with the institution, but leaving others to ponder if it is having a negative impact on university recruiting efforts.

Electing to carry on campus. Participants who carried on campus explained that they carry a firearm for self-defense, and because it is their constitutional right to do so (two themes that will be examined further in later sections). James explained his experience with carrying as well as why he does it, "Well certainly, yeah, I would and I do [carry] for reasons of defending my life against a very serious situation that I could not get out of." Doc explained why he carries, "It's my right, my constitutional right, to be able to defend myself."

Supporters of concealed carry electing not to carry on campus. Others spoke about their decision not to carry, but often examined why they might consider doing so in the future. The reasons are similar to those who carry now: self-defense. Elizabeth explained why she does not carry on campus:

> I know I would never concealed carry because I am like the most ditzy-minded person I know. And, I would forget to put the safety on, and I would accidentally discharge [it]. I know that because I know myself well enough to know that would happen.

Elizabeth continued to explain another reason why she does not carry concealed, "And I'm not yet 21, so right now it is not an option." However, she is a supporter of CCOC, and thinks she might carry in the future:

> For the most part I don't think I would. I don't trust myself with a fatal weapon. And, I think that's key to concealed carry...is responsible ownership. I think that's what most people don't understand. And, I don't know what I'm doing. So, I wouldn't. Maybe years down the road if I felt like I was a more responsible person.

Stella also supports CCOC, but chooses not to carry because:

> In my lived experience, I am not responsible enough to carry a gun. So, I would not carry a gun on this campus because I know that as a person I am not ready to have that with me. However, if I ever would get to that spot in my life where I do feel comfortable or feel unsafe, I would consider it.

In a response similar to Elizabeth's, Stella considers why she may consider carrying in the future:

> As a woman walking on campus at night I am hyperaware of [my safety]... and even during the day. I think I'm more hyperaware and that is one reason I have thought of it. There's something in me because of my identity as a woman that makes me feel a little more [uneasiness].

Stella also explained how she lives with a survivor of sexual assault:

> [I] hadn't been around an experience like that, or someone else's lived experience around that. Hearing her story has made me think a lot about how I am, in my space, and how aware I am of space, and people around me.

In the end, Stella came full circle and decided that regardless of the reasons she thought carrying a gun may not be a good idea for her. Stella concluded:

> But, I'm not responsible enough to carry a gun. I just wouldn't. For her life, she's got to do what she's got to do. But for me, it's just not there yet. I do have some mace. I think I have that under control. Could I pull a gun on someone if that was the situation? I don't know if I could do that either.

Sean, a supporter of CCOC, has not considered carrying on campus. He shared why:

> Honestly, I've never had a moment where I have said to my wife, “I'm thinking about doing this”, and she's had to talk me out of it. It’s not like I want to, and I'm arguing myself out of it. [It is] just not a big desire.

Stella and Elizabeth both focused on the responsibility required to carry a concealed firearm, and they were keenly aware that they did not feel comfortable with that responsibility. The latter part of Stella’s response was also much like Elizabeth’s response despite her imagining circumstances where she may want to have a concealed firearm with her. Although Sean supports CCOC, he does not have a desire to carry. This is unlike Stella and Elizabeth’s responses, because he does not feel it is something he would ever consider doing, while they can foresee eventually carrying a concealed firearm. The primary reason for this would be to protect themselves from an attacker. The notion of carrying for protection is why Stella, Elizabeth, James and Doc have made the decision to have a concealed firearm now, or to acquire one in the future.

Why non-supporters of concealed carry on choose to not carry a firearm. Some participants do not carry on campus because they fail to see the purpose of doing so, or they feel like it would change who they are and how they see the world. Steele has not considered carrying a concealed weapon, and he questions the purpose. Steele shared,

“I'm not a hunter. I don't even skeet shoot or target practice. So, why would I ever want to…why?”

Martina also does not carry and believes carrying would impact how others would perceive her, as well as her own perception of the world:

> It's just not my style. It just doesn't align with my values. For some reason this image of being judged is going through my head right now, “Wow, if I were to carry a gun, what would that look like?” And, I know people would totally judge me because they know who I am, and I'm not in that mindset, viewpoint, or standpoint.

Fred believes carrying a firearm does not fit with his reality:

> I haven't had any experiences to affect that. I don't know anybody who has had experiences to affect that. I guess, maybe, I just give people the benefit of the doubt...that they're going to treat me…not even be nice to me...but just give me my space.

Dave believed there are other ways to neutralize a threat, “Hopefully I’m in a situation where I'm able to talk to people.”

These participants emphasized how perceptions of others, trust in fellow citizens, and diplomatic measures are more at the forefront of their perspectives as to why they do not carry concealed. These perspectives differ from those who support CCOC citing a necessity for personal safety and observation of Second Amendment rights. These perspectives display a diverse approach to recognizing this need to ensure personal safety, or even how participants perceive the likelihood of a threat to that safety. It is not that those supportive of CCOC think a threat to safety is more eminent than those who are not supportive. However, they do feel the need to be prepared for a possible threat, should it happen. This may indicate that those who carry concealed put more value on this means of defense, whereas participants who are unsupportive of CCOC spend less time analyzing how to defend their personal safety, at least in a manner that would require

lethal force. They are unwilling to live in fear, they trust others more, or they prefer non-combative measures.

Knowing someone who carries on campus. Participants discussed whether they knew others on campus who carried. Those who knew others who carry tended to either support CCOC, or carry concealed themselves. James and Doc both carry concealed and also indicated that they each of know several people who carry. One explanation for this is the tendency for people to be acquainted with others who share the same values.

Amy knew some students, but no faculty or staff, who carried on campus. Elizabeth thought that she knew others who carry, but had no details to their carrying frequency, "I assume yes…it's a safe assumption...[an] educated guess. How often they carry? I don't know."

Participants who were not aware of others who have carried explained it was because they have not asked; or, that they were new to the university and have not met many people, let alone someone who carries. Fred was not aware of anyone who carried on campus, but anticipates that may change in the future:

> I think it's definitely because I'm newer [to campus]. The longer I stay here, and after doing this, my curiosity has been piqued a little bit. I'm not going [to go] around asking anyone if you're carrying. But, I'm sure I'll meet or know somebody.

Policy's Impact on Affiliation With the University

In this section I explore participants' thoughts on how or if MPU's concealed carry policy has influenced their decision to enroll or work at the institution. These feelings uncover how much or if concealed carry was considered in their decision when seeking to work or attend classes at MPU. For some participants, it was of no

consequence because they did not know of the policy when choosing the institution. However, when some participants realized the policy, they were proud to be associated with an institution that supported CCOC. The concealed carry policy was the deciding factor for two participants when choosing an institution in which to teach and attend classes, and it may be the reason for leaving MPU if the policy was ever reversed.

Concealed carry policy not a deciding factor. Middle Pacific's CCOC policy did not influence most participants' decision to attend or work at the institution. Martina said, "It didn't at all, whatsoever." Fred simply stated he did not know it existed. Amy was also unaware of the policy, saying, "I had no idea, I had no idea what their policy was, what their stance was, philosophy, nothing when I chose to come." Stella had other things on her mind, "That was the furthest thing from my 18-year-old little young woman's mind. It was like, oh this is pretty, oh these classes are great." Adam shared his perspective, as an employee, "I don't think I even learned about it until after I was here for a year. And, then I was, like, 'What is this conversation happening?' 'People really want to carry guns on campus?' So, it doesn't impact me."

Dave was unaware of the policy, but believed it may influence prospective faculty members from working at an institution allowing concealed carry:

> I had a faculty member who currently works for us say that when she was at a professional meeting that…this came up roughly between the shootings at Sandy Hook and the debate in the state legislature here...that they were all just aghast at the notion that guns would be allowed on campus at the place where she worked and how she could go to work every day knowing that people could be walking around with guns. And then [they] followed that up by saying, "There's no way I would ever apply for a job in your state."

Dave also noted that he is not sure that if it really came down to accepting a job or not, that these same associates would feel the same way as just speaking about it in a casual conversation:

> Talk is cheap. Saying that at a conference over a beer is one thing. But, then if they need an academic job maybe they would sing a different tune. I have not had anybody turn down a job because of that.

Three participants explained they did not know about the policy, but were glad that they ended up at a CCOC institution. James shared:

> It wasn't something that I realized when I first started there. But once the issue started to matter to me, then I was really proud. Without trying to, I ended up at one of the very few public institutions of higher education in the entire country where I could engage in that behavior without breaking the law.

When asked if how she was influenced by the concealed carry policy when choosing MPU Elizabeth shared:

> It didn't [matter] when I was applying for schools. That wasn’t something I was thinking about. In hindsight, I wish it was something that I was thinking about when I was looking at where to go. I mean ultimately my applications were put in the schools because of their programs and because of their costs, and because of other things, and I don't know if that would have been a deciding factor.

Doc shared that the policy was not an influencing factor in his decision, but he imagines how it could be a deciding factor to leave the institution if the policy was changed to ban concealed carry:

> No [it did not influence me], I'm glad we have our policy in place the way we do but it really has no bearing on why I'm here working. Now I'll tell you what, if they made it so that concealed carry were not allowed on campus and I had a job opportunity that was equally attractive as what I do here now, I certainly might consider that if that particular institution didn't have silly laws in place.

Concealed carry policy was a deciding factor. The concealed carry policy was a deciding factor for Kent and Alyssa, a husband and wife looking for a new institution. Kent shared why this was important in his decision:

> We were at a school where there was a shooting...at Virginia Tech...and after everything happened we considered our views on the right to keep and bear arms, the right CCOC, on guns in general. [We] decided we were supporters of the right to keep and bear arms, CCOC, etc. and tried to lobby the school to change their rule to allow self-defense. When they refused to, we both graduated and said we're going to a school that specifically allows concealed carry.

The concealed carry policy was as important to Alyssa when choosing to attend MPU, "I applied to seven graduate programs and I got into five of them, and everything else being held equal, MPU was my top choice because they respected my right to self-defense."

The perspectives of participants ranged from this being vital in their consideration to being of little to no consequence in their decision. In the case of MPU, a permissive CCOC policy was influential in attracting those who consider self-defense and the Second Amendment a priority, and one that does not exempt a campus of higher education. This policy has influenced the campus's ability to recruit students and staff who seek a campus with such a policy. It is also apparent that it could have the opposite effect on recruitment of other students or faculty, as Dave pointed out. While even Dave admitted in his discussion with colleagues who said they would not work at such an institution, ultimately individuals may choose differently if they were actually offered a job there. However, it is still a topic attached to MPU. Concealed carry policies may or may not have implications for faculty recruitment, but it could be something administrators may want to consider as they continue to operate with a permissive CCOC policy as a part of the institution's identity.

Participants' Rationale for Stances on Concealed Carry on Campus

In this section, I explore the rationales participants develop to support their stance for or against CCOC. Participants shared perspectives on their rationales bolstering their stance on concealed carry, and they also responded to the rationales the opposing side used to support their stance. For example, participants who did not generally support CCOC were asked to respond to supporters of CCOC using constitutional rights as a premise to support their stance. Conversely, in another example, participants who supported concealed carry were asked to respond to participants' rationale regarding the risks of CCOC, such as prominent alcohol use among college students. Participants as a whole cited rationales which included constitutional rights, safety, the concealed carry permitting processes, and the educational mission of institutions of higher education (IHE).

Rights

Supporters of CCOC often cited their rights as outlined by the Second Amendment, or suggested CCOC was predicated upon a natural right for personal safety and survival. Some participants opposing CCOC recognized a constitutional right for self-defense using a firearm, but they were still uncomfortable with firearms being carried on campus. Other participants cited alternate interpretations of the Second Amendment. These participants believed the Second Amendment should be considered in a modern context, as self-protection may mean something different today. Some supporters and non-supporters of CCOC both recognized the importance of restrictions on the Second Amendment. Whether it is restricting the right of convicted criminals, or

restricting the types of firearms to which people have access, it appears there is some agreement.

Rights as a rationale to allow concealed carry on campus. James described the importance of observing his constitutional right to carry, and how this constitutional right is predicated upon our natural right to live safely and defend ourselves when needed. James shared:

> In general it's something that should be allowed...basically a personal human right to defend oneself. The founders of the country, the folks who convened and agreed upon that document, believe that those rights...that the document espoused were there...I mean they existed naturally without the document being there.

Alyssa expressed a similar view, describing her basic human right to defend herself. She adamantly spoke of how much this right meant to her:

> I just really have very little tolerance for people who make emotional arguments now. If you have any statistics or legitimate research that would show that our argument is not a good valid one, then please bring that to me. I want my right to self-defense, and that's my basic human right. And if you're going to take that away from me, then you gotta have a damn good reason why you're going to do that.

Elizabeth discussed how constitutional rights can be interpreted in different situations, but also found importance in the prioritization of the Amendments:

> It's nice to defend yourself. It is a right, and, I think that's very important. I do think that the Constitution was designed so that it's flexible enough to change, but rigid enough to maintain a strong backbone. I'm not opposed to amendments, but I do feel as though that [it] is one amendment that if the forefathers thought it was important enough to put it second. Maybe it's something to consider.

Doc believed it is also important to understand when someone should not be able to exercise that right:

> I definitely believe in a person having the right to defend themselves. Therefore, as long as it’s within the confines of the law, and one is not necessarily a felon that is not allowed to carry a weapon, then I definitely support a person being able to have the right to do that.

Stella thought that the space on a state-owned institution is no different than anywhere else; therefore, these rights should be observed:

> Being [at] a public university has made me kind of feel this is a public property. And, in public spaces I feel strongly towards fundamental constitutionalism...that concealed carry is a right that every individual has just by being a citizen.

Sean viewed carrying a firearm as a right and a privilege. He explained the importance of being aware of the responsibilities that accompany the right to carry:

> Every right does not exist in a vacuum. Rights, every one of them, confers a responsibility on them. And if you're not willing to take the responsibility, I'm not willing to grant you the right. End of story.

Participants who believed it was a constitutional or basic human right used this rationale as one of their leading reasons why they supported permissive CCOC policies. Because this is a leading argument that many participants used, it seems to be a crucial part of their stance. It also seems that this argument carries much of the weight when it comes to the discussion on whether CCOC should be allowed or not. This is evident with the past challenge to ban concealed carry at MPU. It was through constitutional statute that the permissive CCOC policy was allowed to remain in place. It was one of the most important vehicles, for those at MPU that supported CCOC, to ensure the policy would remain unchanged.

Responding to rights as a rationale for concealed carry on campus. Some participants considered how important these rights were to supporters of gun rights and concealed carry. Fred respected the rights of people to own and carry firearms; however, he thought this was not enough to support having firearms on campus, saying, “I respect the right to have them, and that they want to defend themselves. I get that as well. Would I feel any safer knowing that a bunch of our student body has firearms on them? I don't.”

Martina explained:

> I'm learning how to accept more of what it means to feel like... "Wow, it's my right to carry a weapon for protection, or have this because I want it." And, that's not my personal perspective to have my own weapon...but, for others I need to be more understanding that that's kind of how people live their lives and their viewpoints.

Amy also understood the importance of observing constitutional rights and how important they are for supporters of concealed carry. However, it was still not enough to change her feelings with allowing CCOC, "I think the people who have a strong opinion about needing to carry have an absolute strong opinion about that, and they will argue and they will fight because they believe so strongly in their right to carry."

Other participants did not support the use of the Second Amendment as an argument in the debate of CCOC. Adam noted the language of the Constitution, and stated his belief about how it should inform our interpretation and implementation 200 years later:

> The Constitution in some ways is an archaic document. It was written over 200 years ago when we had these great little muskets that we put a little ball in powder, and all that...right? So, I think there has to be this room of evolution of thought...like we have progressed in the last couple hundred years...weapons have progressed. I think the right to bear arms doesn't say it's the right to carry a gun. It's a right to bear arms. I think Tasers, I think pepper spray...I think these arms can be considered in multiple tiers.

Dave argued:

> The Second Amendment argument is not persuasive to me in the least. I'm of the opinion that having looked at it, and having read some of literature…the Second Amendment refers to militias and not to individual right to carry weapons. Secondly, even if you were to assume that it conferred on individuals the right to own a weapon, that does not mean it's an unregulated right. And, so courts have long held...that's long been the practice in the country...that legislatures can regulate ownership of guns.

Cliff also opposed of the use of the Second Amendment to support pro-gun arguments, and addressed a specific facet of the constitutional debate:

> I think the framers of the Constitution intended to allow the citizens to reform government, and if they needed to do it in a violent way to be able to have the means to do that. The way I look at that is to say the intention was that we can rise up against the government. There's a lot of ways to do that. So, those arms could be a credit card, those arms could be money, those arms to be all kinds of different things. They don't specifically mean firearms...guns. It's my reading of the Second Amendment.

Participants, who were not supportive of CCOC, had opinions ranging from recognizing the importance of respect for the right to own and carry a weapon, to being unconvinced that it is relevant or timely to carry a firearm. Fred, Martina, and Amy thought it was important not to infringe on gun ownership rights, even when they may disagree with how the Second Amendment is interpreted and implemented. Even though they were generally uncomfortable with the idea of CCOC, they thought it was important to respect other perspectives and values. Adam, Dave, and Cliff did not think a rationale based on rights was founded in anything other than a time long passed where in someone would need to fight for freedom and to reform an oppressive government. They did not believe the context exists any longer for which this rationale is based.

Concealed Carry Permit Process

Participants discussed the permit process as one way of supporting CCOC, as it potentially introduces a security step, while ensuring that law-abiding citizens may carry their weapons to defend themselves. Some were concerned the permit process brings a burden to the law-abiding citizen. The burdens that were mentioned include creating accessibility issues due to the cost of obtaining permits, and being treated similarly to criminals due to their information being entered into database via fingerprints.

James was skeptical of requiring someone to get a concealed carry permit explaining that it really inhibits law-abiding citizens:

> I don't know that the permit process is necessarily a good thing because of the idea that people who shouldn't be carrying a firearm are probably going to do it anyway if they want to...because a law or a policy doesn't stop them. And, so the obstacles that the permit process puts in a law-abiding person's way will sort of put that person at a disadvantage while they wait.

Adam thought the issue of background checks, as well as the financial burden created by the permitting process, were similar to bureaucratic overhead needed to process his students for community service:

> Every student who participates in AmeriCorps has to go through an FBI-level background check. We had to buy a $7000 fingerprint machine, plus the computer...and, we sit here and we scan students fingerprints that gets uploaded to an FBI server which they do background checks...for them to get cleared to do community service. I would add, though, I had never thought about the accessibility piece. Maybe there's a way to subsidize the background checks in that capacity.

Martina wants to see the permit process maintained:

> I don't think that it should at all be lessened or loosened up whatsoever. Just because with someone trying to obtain a gun, it's necessary that there is all of these involved steps because I think it really solidifies in their mind why they want that gun, and the intention behind that gun and what's involved. And, it brings out the seriousness of carrying a weapon and what that means. And, the responsibility with that. Yeah, of course, there should be multiple processes you have to go through to get a gun, if not more, I think.

The process to receive a concealed carry permit was an important issue to those who support CCOC as well as those who do not support it. Participants shared their rationales as they relate to the permit process. There was a difference of interpretation in the permit process and what it means to require this process for vetting potential permit holders. It is evident that James thought the process was too invasive and it could unnecessarily scrutinize law-abiding citizens. This is probably because James is himself

a permit holder. He believed he is a part of the solution, not the problem. He thought to be treated and tracked similarly to a criminal is a disconcerting prospect. Adam and Martina feel it an absolute necessity for someone interested in carrying a firearm. They think it comes down to limiting the accessibility of firearms, and to ensuring whoever does receive access to these permits was vetted thoroughly. Even though they do not carry a firearm themselves, they recognize it as something that requires a great responsibility, which should not necessarily be granted to just anyone.

Personal and Campus Safety

Participants often discussed personal safety when they spoke about their CCOC perspective. Perceived benefits include providing self-defense, deterrence to crime, and an equalizing factor. Risks that were discussed were misidentification, training/preparation, alcohol, drugs, partying, mental health, campus population, and accidental discharge.

The concept of feeling safer. Participants had varying perspectives regarding safety if others were carrying concealed on campus. Some thought it would contribute to safety on campus because it would serve as a deterrent to criminals, as well as the potential to supplement campus authorities in their safety efforts. Others believed they would not feel safer knowing others were carrying a concealed firearm because of its potential to aggravate common high-stress scenarios, or because they already thought the campus was safe enough. In addition, participants expressed concern for the adverse impact on safety on campus, saying more firearms would contribute to the problem and not the solution, and offered alternative avenues to augment safety.

Some participants shared that they would not feel safer knowing others carry on campus. Fred thought that just because people had a gun did not mean they know how to use it. He also stated that he essentially would not feel safe around someone who had a gun. Amy doubted that others carrying would increase campus safety, saying, “I don't think there's any evidence that concealed carry initiatives make campuses safer, or any place safer. And again it's my limited understanding, my limited perspective but I don't see how it makes it [safer].” She also would not feel safer knowing others were carrying, because she already felt safe on campus:

> Initially my thought is I don't think I would feel any safer. I feel pretty safe. I mean I'm in a job where students don't necessarily love me all the time. But I don't think I'm in one of the positions where people would come in and do harm necessarily, I hope.

Adam pondered what the impact would be to his feelings of safety if a concealed firearm were to be unconcealed:

> The idea of concealed carry and having folks be able to carry on campus is a little daunting for me. Working in the student center that is glass everything for instance and not knowing who is in the space, who has a license, but you may see a gun, or it may fall out of a bag, or maybe hanging in a jacket, sort of freaks me out as an administrator in some capacity.

Dave’s perspectives on safety were tied to his position as a faculty member and dealing with students and their stresses:

> Sometimes you have to be in a situation where a student is upset with either you as a faculty member...or with another faculty member...and you [have] to explain to them why the paper they never turned in isn't an A, or why this grade is warranted...those sorts of things. And, sometimes people get agitated. I've had students get agitated at times either talking about issues in my class or because of something that's happened in another class.

Dave continued with another student/faculty scenario:

> The end of the semester is a prime time for people to get stressed. Deadlines...am I going to graduate or not...and that sort of stuff. Again, as a department chair I

> have my own students to deal with. But then I have [hundreds] of majors...and we've got [thousands] of student credit hours each semester...yeah, so that's a lot of kids who are potentially upset.

Dave noted how he has not been involved in a situation where someone has brandished a firearm, but also sees CCOC as something that is not conducive to student/faculty relationships:

> [When] you go into a career as a college teacher, you don't necessarily think that's going to be one of the things you face in life. Manning a gas station at night, that's one of the risks of the trade. When you go to this profession you don't think that's one of the things that you're going to encounter.

Bob questioned why someone would feel safer with a firearm, and why concealed carry firearms were more a part of the problem than the solution. Bob believed people should focus on alternative methods to making people feel safer on campus:

> We need to look to make campuses safer in ways that are focused on law enforcement. So if I'm afraid of personal attack, than I need to be an advocate of decreasing the chances that I'll be in a place where [a] personal attack is likely, or more likely - dark parking lots. [Solutions could be] call boxes, quick response, bigger police force.

Cliff also felt less safe knowing people are carrying concealed:

> I would feel less safe. Guns in general make me feel less safe, whether they're pointed at me or not. I guess part of what I've struggled with is this argument that people make, "if more people had guns we would be safer." That one I just don't understand. If that's the rationale, I want to carry a gun on a college campus and I want to conceal it because I think it will make me and other people safer. I think that is untrue. That's just not factually correct.

Other participants did feel safer knowing concealed carry permit holders were carrying on campus. Doc shared his perspective:

> I do know colleagues and other people around here who do have permits. Whether they are carrying at the time or not...honestly, [it] is none of my business. So, really it's not going to affect me in that way. But, if I knew they were carrying, would it make me feel safer? Yes.

Doc reasoned, “It helps to keep the lawbreakers and the criminals at bay. I think they’re going to think twice about coming onto a campus where they know that firearms are being carried by other people.”

Sean spoke about his sense of safety being bolstered by the thought that others would be carrying concealed on campus:

> So in general yes. I guess that's what we're just touching on. Even though I am not and don't have a strong desire to [conceal carry]. I think I probably would psychologically feel [a] little bit better knowing some sane folks [carry], not just the police.

Stella described how knowing others who carried would not make her feel unsafe, but also would not increase the sense of safety she would feel on campus:

> I would not feel unsafe. I don't think that [a] person carrying a gun makes me any safer. I don't feel unsafe knowing about it...knowing that it could be there. And, I think I trust my peers. I think that my peers are responsible people. I think there is an incredibly small minority of people who like [to] give the younger generation a bad name. So, I trust my peers to carry a gun.

Participants in this study expanded upon why they feel this way. The reasons those who felt less safe by CCOC were influenced by the position they held on campus. They ranged from feeling it was the responsibility of authorities to keep the campus safe, to feeling concealed carry does not factually make the campus safer. A reason offered for why CCOC would be conducive to safety argued that a larger force of responsible people carrying firearms could thwart crime. These perspectives on whether they felt safer were due to knowing of others who carry on campus. Their points are important because they give a sense of whether the purpose of these firearms is contributing to the perception of safety by constituents. This is helpful in understanding what is needed to support those on campus who feel unsafe, either because there are firearms on campus, or because there are not.

Allowing Concealed Carry and the Benefits to Safety

Proponents of CCOC believed strongly that concealed carry makes campuses safer by deterring would-be attackers, and by providing an equalizing force that would allow someone to defend themselves against a bigger, stronger attacker(s). Participants opposed to CCOC responded to these arguments saying there are other modes for defense. They believed deterrence would be ineffective because those set on perpetrating violence would not think about others having guns before perpetrating their act of violence. Also, they were unconvinced of any equalizing effect because this would only be effective if someone knew they were about to be attacked, which they believed was rarely the case.

Improving self and campus defense. Some participants spoke about self-defense and defense of the campus community. Elizabeth considered CCOC in the case of a campus-shooting incident:

> I think about my classrooms and maybe there's like one person who would maybe conceal carry... and, obviously you don't ask, because that is not something to talk about...but, even if there is that slight chance, it makes me feel a lot safer that knowing maybe one of those adult students in my classroom could potentially save a life.

Alyssa shared her first-hand experience at Virginia Tech and discussed the benefit CCOC would have for either situation:

> People assume, especially because of our [Kent and she] story, that the thing we are most passionate about are school shootings...which it’s extremely rare that anyone would ever be in a mass shooting like that. The things that I worry about, especially as a female, are just walking to my car...someone mugging me...raping me...whatever. Those common things that happen to people every day. I don't ever expect to be in a classroom in a mass shooting. Just because it happened to my friend, that's not the picture that I have in my head of every crime that's ever going to happen.

Doc shared a scenario in which he believed it necessary and appropriate for others to have a firearm other than the perpetrator:

> If others are being threatened, I would want to see that person doing the threatening is stopped. And, the only way you're going to stop somebody like that, is somebody else carrying a weapon. That's why the police carry weapons; because they know they can stop somebody.

Sean commented specifically on defense in cases of mass shootings. He felt concerned that IHE banning CCOC takes away a law-abiding citizen's ability to defend themself and others:

> The problem with the bans...if somebody wants to come onto this campus like that knucklehead did at Virginia Tech, they are not going ask the local police, "Hey, am I allowed to take an assault weapon onto [campus]?" They are just going to do it! Responsible law-abiding citizens, who happen to be armed, can be part of preventing something that would otherwise have been worse.

Steele understood how someone could feel more secure by carrying a firearm on campus, but thinks it may not be an accurate assumption:

> The positive, if there is one...and this is where my inner struggle is...I do believe people should be able to defend themselves. They should be able to live in a society and not feel unsafe. But the risk, or rather the benefit, of having it could be...and I don't know if this is a false feeling... people feel more safe and secure.

Amy's responded to the concept of self-defense being a benefit of CCOC by acknowledging that the supporters of CCOC do see this as a benefit, but she herself would feel uncomfortable with the prospect of carrying a firearm for her own self-defense:

> I can see how self-defense would play into that for people who are pro-gun. I just struggle with the violence piece of it. So, even if there are three men attacking me, to me that is not an adequate option. For me to carry a gun to be able to use in those situations...not that I want something bad to happen to me...but, I think I would take the chances versus having the gun and having to be responsible for the outcome of using it, or showing it, would be.

Cliff identified alternative avenues to carrying a firearm:

> They range from turning and walking away, to calling for help [by] using the various emergency phones we have on campus, using 911 calling. We have been very thoughtful about how we have developed those systems to help an individual who needs help.

Martina believed her views on CCOC have evolved, especially in regard to the benefit of campus defense. She initially did not feel comfortable with the idea that someone around her was carrying a concealed firearm. She stated, "With the person sitting next to me in class, I would want to move. I don't know [what I would do] if I found out they had a gun under their jacket." However, after she thought about the benefit of defense against a mass shooting:

> If I was in a big lecture hall and some random person came in, you know, obviously without a permit or anything …and started shooting...I would want someone next to me, with a certified permit, to get up and be able to shoot that person...because then you would save more lives.

Martina continued her thought as she imagined how law-abiding citizens with concealed carry firearms could contribute to her defense, and the defense of others, in a mass shooting incident. She even explained how she is grateful that there are these people around her who are willing to help provide a defense in this situation:

> The fact that people are taking the time and commitment to learn about what carrying a weapon means, and what that responsibility looks like, and knowing when it is appropriate to use that. I would be so grateful if someone saved my life because they had a weapon, and knew how to use it, and saved me from being killed by someone else.

Deterring potential attackers. Participants rationalized that CCOC might deter others from committing individual assaults or mass shootings, while others thought it would have little to no effect. Elizabeth stated:

> If I am in a 500-person lecture hall and someone comes in with a gun, I'm sure there's at least one other person in that room who has one too, and can even out

> the odds. And, the fact that I've never seen one [and] I've never heard anyone [say], “Here's my gun, look at what I'm carrying.”...makes me feel safer because if I don't know whether or not someone is carrying, neither does a bad guy.

Amy believed CCOC would be ineffective at deterring an attack:

> I feel like if someone is really going to do harm, that knowing someone who has a gun isn't...or could have a gun...I don't think that's going to deter them. I think maybe they'll be more intentional or thoughtful about where they're going. My feelings are that I don’t know that that’s going to necessarily deter anyone.

Adam also responded to the deterrence argument, stating that he was cautious to call it a benefit because of the force it could deliver. He came up with alternatives:

> So the deterrent piece...so if an attacker...if someone larger to someone smaller...and I know there's a gender piece that also plays out in that idea...and I think there are other tools that can be used that is not a gun. So, I think a Taser, I think pepper spray...I think when you're talking about non-lethal force, but force that will stop and create an opportunity to escape, I think is huge.

Cliff thought a criminal would be unconcerned with whether someone had a weapon or not, and whether he thought an attacker’s state of mind would be before an incident:

> I don't think the people who are perpetrating violence care very much whether you have a gun or not. That’s not going to make a difference to them. They are violent individuals. They may only be instantaneously violent because they’ve just lost control.

Equalizing the playing field. Participants offered perspectives on how CCOC allows individuals to defend themself against a larger, stronger attacker(s), or an attacker who has a weapon. Alyssa mentioned her concern earlier of more common crimes outside of mass shootings. She elaborated further on this and shared how a concealed carry firearm could benefit someone as an equalizer:

> As a female...two 300-pound guys coming up and trying to grab me...like I have no chance against them, unless I have a firearm. People say, “Well you know a mass shooting probably will not happen where you are, and really you're safer on campus without a gun, you don't need it because your classroom is never going to

> get shot up". And, I say well, "What if I am walking to my car and somebody grabs me. That's far more likely to happen, and it does happen."

Doc explained how he thought CCOC could equalize a situation. He stated that there is no substitute for a gun when you are involved in a threatening situation involving someone with a firearm:

> I mean, let's face it, when it really comes down to it there is nothing else out there that can give a person command of a unpleasant run-in with someone who means to do you harm. There is nothing else out there...sticks, hammers, screwdrivers, stones, whatever else...I mean there is nothing else out there that can equalize a situation that is unreasonable.

Fred was specifically concerned about situations where someone is surprised by an attacker:

> I can 100% see how it makes people feel safe. I totally get that. It's an equalizer if you know somebody's coming to harm you…which not a lot of criminals are going to make that known. Are you going to have the calmness or the wherewithal to be able to draw your firearm and use it in a manner where you feel unsafe?

Steele shared how he was concerned about the ability of someone to use the weapon to equalize a situation, and that there is a certain amount of preparation that needs to happen before that moment. If there is not adequate preparation, then a firearm may not contribute to leveling the playing field. Steele explained:

> There is a mentality needed to using it. It's one thing to carry it, but are you prepared mentally [and] emotionally to use it? So I think it's a grand assumption to say it's an equalizer, because there is a step ... and you can talk to several law enforcement officers...it's one thing to go through the training, to go to the range, to practice. But when that split-second [comes] to use it, are you prepared to go there?

In summary, rationales provided by supporters of CCOC include the necessity for self and campus defense, the hope to deter crime, as well as an equalizer against a larger, stronger attacker(s). The data from participants presented the benefits of CCOC for a

campus-shooting incident, as well as smaller more common threats such as being a victim of sexual assault or a robbery. It is apparent that some participants feel vulnerable to criminal acts on campus, and should, therefore, from their perspectives not be prevented from the type of protective measure they would take in an off-campus environment.

Allowing Concealed Carry and the Risks to Safety

Participants who did not support CCOC believed that CCOC presents a risk to campus and individual safety. The risks include improper use of a concealed carry firearm, inadequate training/preparation for an attack, the inherent dangers of the campus population (alcohol, partying, drugs use, mental health issues, accidents), and the lethality of a firearm. Participants who supported CCOC did respond to many of these themes. The latter part of this section offers further perspectives of supporters of CCOC and their responses to the risk to safety by specifically noting that there is either no risk for a law-abiding citizen to carry, or if there are risks, that the benefits outweigh the risks.

Improper use of a firearm. Some participants worried that not all concealed carry permit holders would necessarily always act responsibly with their firearm. Martina identified this concern as she spoke of the possible risks to allowing CCOC. She stated, “I would say people who are not appropriately using the privilege of having a concealed carry permit and carrying a weapon appropriately. So, not using it appropriately [is a concern].”

Elizabeth explained how people may not be honest enough with themselves when deciding if carrying a firearm was appropriate for them. Elizabeth shared, “Not everyone has the foresight to say, “Maybe I shouldn't conceal carry”. And, so you can't be in

everyone's brain all the time, and you can't guarantee that they will always make good choices. So that's a risk."

Elizabeth acknowledged this risk might be mitigated through the permitting process:

> So, you can't guarantee that everyone be at their absolute smartest all the time. But that's why we have permits. And, that's why we have gun safety...what lessons that you take. And, I think that so long as we really encourage that mindset, then it will be a minimal risk.

James explained his perspective by using analogies of risks associated with other behaviors:

> So, the example I like to point to is alcohol. If you look at violent crime, you'll see that alcohol is very commonly a factor in that. Yet, at the same time the reason, you don't ban that because of the risks. [It] is because it's up to the individual to exercise their rights responsibly.

James expanded on his perspective and spoke of how rarely he has heard of a concealed carry permit holder exercising their right improperly. James expounded:

> I think that is just based on you don't hear about the worst case scenario that anti-carry people mention [that] maybe there will be a misunderstanding and somebody innocent will get hurt. Or, in a bad situation some bystander will get hurt. Like the person with the permit would just make it worse. And, you never hear about any of that.

Inadequate training and preparation for a proper response. Participants who were worried about CCOC posing a risk to campus and individual safety were concerned about the training associated with carrying a firearm. They questioned whether concealed carry permit holders would be properly prepared to address a threatening situation. This concern was primary in much of Fred's perspective. Fred questioned if permit holders were properly trained and prepared for a threatening situation:

> You have a gun, but do you know how to use it? Are you going to be able to use it effectively in a situation where you are being attacked, your friend is being

> attacked, [or] you are witnessing a crime? Because getting your weapon doesn't mean you have the effective training to use it.

Fred used the training of police officers as an example of what he considered proper training to be, and he was concerned that others who carry firearms may not fulfill that standard of training, “I'm just thinking if somebody were to actually attack me violently...just the fear that would come over me...and would somebody be able to calm him or herself enough to be able to use that [firearm]? Because that's huge!”

Adam had a similar perspective and explained:

> People use the same jargon, "Well, if I had a gun I could have stopped the person." I think people in those situations are going to feel so pressured, and there's so much anxiety that comes into play, that I don't know if someone is going to have the right frame of mind to shoot the perpetrator. Or, they may accidentally shoot somebody else.

Bob said, “I don't think enough people are trained in the responsible use of firearms to make a difference in terms of improving safety.” Cliff shared his concerns for a lack of training and preparation for a threatening situation:

> It’s always the worst-case scenario…you would have no idea how to respond in that situation. The police would know how to do that. They have been trained, and are repeatedly trained, in how to deal with those kinds of situations. And, oh by the way, they also walk around with bulletproof vests on, and all kinds of other things, because they recognize the risks associated with dealing with those kinds of elements, or those kinds of situations.

Participants supporting CCOC understood the need for initial and ongoing training with a firearm. However, some participants expressed differing perspectives on whether training should be regulated as a part of obtaining and keeping their concealed carry permit. For example, James said:

> There's a training requirement that simply…I don't remember the exact language of it...but it is satisfied by among other things, the NRA basic pistol course. And, that course really is safety and operation rather than proficiency. People

> definitely need to have familiarity with a firearm before they start carrying but I'm not so sure that it's a good idea to enforce that through regulation.

Alyssa had a similar perspective on the enforcement of a training requirement.

Responsible gun owners take the responsibility of ongoing training seriously:

> By and large the gun owners that we know are very responsible individuals and they want to take their training and their knowledge to the next level. And, people do that on their own without any mandate, or without anyone forcing them to do any more training.

Other participants explained that most gun owners are not new to firearms or training. Some participants shared examples of how familiar they are with their weapons, and how it has been a part of their identity for years. Doc spoke about his perspective:

> There are people who have very little experience handling firearms. There are others, myself included, who have practically teethed on them. To me it's like second nature to handle a firearm. But I can understand, there is a judgment call when a firearm is in one's hands. You've got to recall your training.

Kent shared a similar perspective, noting that ingrained training is evident in responsible gun owners. Training such as when to use a firearm, and what kind of preparation is necessary to be ready for any given a situation:

> A lot of people who get concealed carry permits are confident in their use of them even in a tense situation. And if you go on the web and do a search for, for example 11-year-old defends home. You won't just come up with one story, you will come up with dozens. I mean you see a lot of people who are well under 18 years of age who are able to handle a firearm to defend their homes or their families in various situations.

Kent continued by commenting on what it means to be a responsible part of the gun culture, especially knowing gun safety rules and knowing the appropriate time to use a firearm. Kent explained:

> For us it means people who keep each other in check. The gun culture also talks a lot about when it's proper to use a firearm and when it's not. You don't use a firearm because you have a verbal disagreement with someone, or because a

> teacher gives you a bad grade, or because your buddy picked on you in school. Use a firearm because your life is in danger.

Kent emphasized that gun owners recognize the importance of training, as well as the importance for continued and specialized training:

> Having said that, however, there are plenty of people who decide to carry a firearm who have no previous experience with shooting guns. So, I told them the reality. You can go out and take a basic training course, learn some basics including shooting a gun, and get a concealed carry permit. That probably isn't enough, [though].

Kent spoke about examples of his continuous training:

> So, as Alyssa said we advocate and people self-advocate a lot, too, for additional training...how to be safe, to not make a mistake, to handle tense situations, [and] to handle the stress of the situation. And, we even have Airsoft guns, like a lot of people, that are great for doing practice. Those are the kinds of things that really help overall.

Elizabeth spoke about the importance of training, and practicing real-life scenarios:

> I think that's a very valid concern. It's a very different thing when you're at a firing range versus in the heat of the moment, and I don't think there's any way to guarantee success no matter how hard you train for something.

Elizabeth thought it is important for people to remember that supporters of CCOC support training and following proper procedures to obtaining a permit. She explained:

> I think people who understand and have had the training and get that [it] is a deadly weapon that should not be used unless it needs to be, and are trained in how to use it, I am comfortable with being in the same room with that.

Aspects of the student population. Some participants suggested students, who are still developing emotionally, might not be mature enough to be carrying firearms. Steele wondered if students possessed the mental maturity to understand what it means to carry and potentially use a firearm:

> I believe there is maturity, an emotional and mental maturity, that needs to take place if you pull out that firearm. Are you really ready to engage with someone;

> or, pull that trigger, in a matter speaking, if in harm's way? That's a huge mental shift.

Martina questioned whether students have developed enough to handle all the responsibilities they have. Martina shared, "[It] is such a developmental stage in people's lives. And, the fact that they are going through so many things socially, personally, emotionally and at some point…sometimes students don't know how to handle their emotions." Amy's comments mirrored these concerns by saying, "We are allowing some who were not probably in the right frame of mind or the right maturity level, development level, to be accessing and bringing guns around others students."

Adam shared his concerns regarding the population on campus, saying that there could be bad judgments regarding when to use the firearm. Adam said, "I think specifically on campus my comfort level might be a little more weary because I'm trying to imagine an 18-year-old carrying a gun on campus. An 18-year-old compared to a 26-year-old trained police officer...the experience is different."

Doc expanded on how he felt about students carrying firearms, noting situations and emotions they tend to deal with on campus. Doc shared:

> You have a large gathering of younger people who may not have as much experience... even with firearms…or in dealing with conflict. When people are still sort of working out some of that stuff, you have people away from home for the first time, large numbers of young people just not having a whole lot of experience necessarily dealing with emotions or conflicts, interpersonal conflicts, and that sort of stuff.

Cliff considered that students make mistakes, and that they could make one with a firearm. This is a special concern with the current generation of students. Cliff said:

> The consequence of those decisions...just recognizing that we just do that...that we just make dumb choices on occasion. What's the risk of that choice? If you elevate that risk to physical harm, I think that's a bad bargain to make. We have so much we have trivialized. The Die Hard 3 [movie]...we've trivialized in these

> younger generations. They've killed millions of people through video games, watched millions of deaths through movies. And, so I think it makes that they are just one step closer to that not being a big deal.

Participants supporting CCOC campus responded to this concern that the student population may lack the development and maturity to carry a firearm on campus. An important point of discussion made by participants is that of the age requirement for a concealed carry permit. Elizabeth broached this in her perspective; noting the 21-year-old requirement, and other responsibilities 21-year-old are granted:

> I think that one misconception about concealed carry, and this is one that I had before I started doing research, is that it is anyone can carry. And, it's not. You have to be at least 21-years-old, and for me though many people disagree with me on this, if that age was any lower I think my support would be less strong. I think that if we trust 16-year-olds with 2-ton vehicles that can kill a person, and if we trust 18-year-olds to serve and protect our country, and we trust 21-year-olds to drink alcohol and now to smoke marijuana, [then] to me it seems foolish not to trust 21-year-olds who are going through the proper channels, and taking the proper licensure and who are doing their best to do it safely. It seems, like; foolish to me to say you are too immature to do this, especially when 21 is the minimum.

Stella acknowledged ongoing development in college students, but thought that 21 was an appropriate age for people to obtain a concealed carry permit saying, "I mean, I agree I've grown a lot since I was 18. So, I think that there's a lot of possibility of growth for 18 to 21-year-olds. But, I also think whoever chose 21 chose it because they believed we are good-to-go at that age."

James also responded with the reminder of the 21-year-old requirement. He expanded his perspective by commenting that human beings develop throughout their lives, "Well, in [this state] particularly, concealed carry is not possible legally for anybody under 21. Obviously, there is development that goes on throughout your life. People develop mentally all the way up until the point of the end of their lives." However, James shared that he was supportive of 18-year-olds being given the right to

carry a concealed carry permit and firearm. He was supportive of this concept because, similar to the comments Elizabeth made, we trust 18-year-olds with other responsibilities so why not this one? James speaks specifically of the military service:

> I think if we've established that it's okay to send people who are 18 or older...it's okay to train them in the military and send them off to fight for the country...then clearly that's a development issue there. I think even 18-year-olds, if they demonstrate responsible behavior then they shouldn't be prohibited from carrying a firearm if they follow all the rules and regulations.

Kent shared similar comments that those who advocate for CCOC do so for legal concealed carry, which does have the 21-year-old age requirement. Kent said:

> First and foremost the advocacy [is] largely for those of age [to] carry on campus. The advocacy is mostly for people who can get concealed carry permits. Which for the majority of the country is 21 years [of age] or older. So we're already talking about seniors, graduate students, faculty, [and] staff...not freshman.

However, Kent's view was similar to James' regarding support for 18-21-year-olds to have the opportunity to legally obtain a concealed carry permit and firearm. He surmised why others would note support this idea, and why he does support it:

> Of course, if you watch MTV Spring break edition, you would absolutely have reason to believe that [they should not carry guns]. But, this is the same perspective that people won't go in the ocean after they watch shark week. It's the same reason that people say we should take guns away when we see someone was shot on the news. It's a very isolated view. It's a very narrow population that actually they're basing this judgment on, whereas a majority of 18 to 21-year-olds probably could handle owning and carrying a firearm just fine.

Alcohol, drugs, partying and firearms amount to a risky environment.

Participants spoke about CCOC being a risk to campus safety because of the potential abuse of alcohol and drugs. Some participants were concerned about adding firearms to situations where these substances are being abused, especially in a party environment. Amy shared her concern by saying, "It's a high party environment. We know that binge drinking or high-risk drinking [happens on campus]. We know the culture of high-risk

substance abuse and other drugs." Bob was also concerned about alcohol abuse and having firearms around. He reflected on his experiences as a student who experimented with alcohol. He imagined the consequences of abusing alcohol in the presence of firearms:

> I always think of me as an undergrad experimenting with alcohol...reckless with it...don't know your own limits and becoming much more uninhibited...much less inhibited...depending on how you want to say that. If we think that driving is a problem, think about drunk-gun handling.

Participants supporting CCOC understood this concern, but wanted to point out that most partying involving alcohol and drugs happens off campus grounds. Kent shared his perspective:

> Also, an important thing to note is that people think that guns on campus are dangerous because students drink and have parties, but most parties take place off campus. So most of the drinking...partying...risky behavior…is taking place somewhere where there really isn't even an argument about CCOC.

Alyssa's response mirrored Kent's answer that most of this behavior takes place off campus. Moreover, even in those places, she had not heard of any incidents. Alyssa shared:

> I guess I would just say, and reiterate, that it's not a reason to necessarily disallow CCOC specifically, because most of the partying and stuff like that happens off-campus. People are already allowed to have guns in their homes off campus, and it's been pretty much a non-issue. I've never heard of any incident.

James had similar comments regarding partying, alcohol, and drugs making CCOC on campus risky. James explained:

> So, alcohol and firearms are a lot like alcohol and driving in that they are very dangerous things to mix. But, if you are talking about not allowing CCOC because of alcohol use... really...most of the alcohol use is happening off campus where people are not going to be bothered by university officials who will crack down on them for drinking on campus.

Other participants spoke about this being a risk that has never become a reality. As a college student who has been a part of campus social gatherings, Elizabeth had not experienced or heard of an incident. She also noted that if this were to present a problem, it most likely would not be from a concealed carry permit holder:

> I personally have never been to a party where a dangerous weapon was brought out and played with. I have never heard of it happening. I'm sure somewhere there is an idiot who isn't being smart. But, that's probably not someone with a concealed carry license. That's probably someone who just has a gun. Everyone I know with a license takes safety so seriously.

Doc's comments were similar to Elizabeth's. He also had not recalled hearing about any incidents that involved these kinds of activities and firearms. Doc explained:

> You don't hear too much about those things being reported in the paper. It seems like we hear about violent calls when it involves anything else. So, I'm assuming if it involved students and firearms...and drugs and alcohol...I'm sure we'd be hearing about that, too. But, around this campus anyway, we have a pretty good safety record I think.

James said these issues were not connected. Even if these behaviors are happening more on a college campus, the risks of the misuse of a firearm are no greater because of CCOC. James says there are irresponsible people in the world, and they may engage in this type of risky behavior. Furthermore, he believed firearms owners are more responsible, and would not emulate this behavior:

> The prevalence of alcohol and drug use in college students, and the ownership of firearms by college students...even if there is a large amount of both...I don't think those two issues are necessarily connected. I have found that generally firearms owners...responsible firearms owners...will take measures to make sure those firearms aren't available to people when there's drinking going on.

Stella had a similar perspective, saying that she does think there are risks with mixing alcohol and guns. However, she says that the campus environment is no different than the outside world, and that these behaviors are prevalent there as well. Stella said:

> I don't believe that guns and alcohol should be mixed, and I don't know that our university setting is a lot different then the real world. I think there are a lot of people who party... who aren't just college students.

Sean acknowledged this risk as well. He imagined a scenario where there could be potential harm:

> The alcohol environment where somebody happens to be carrying...and you see especially stupid behavior all the time. Add a weapon to that...and, of course, a weapon could be something he goes and grabs...a stick or a baseball bat or whatever...but the point here is...if I'm carrying that with me…and I am in a drug- or alcohol-induced stupor …so there is a potential for harm.

Unauthorized access to firearms, accidents, and mental health concerns. Participants were also concerned that CCOC would present the risk of someone accessing and using another person's firearm if there were more concealed guns on campus. They also expressed concern for accidents happening, whether it would be an accidental discharge, or an innocent bystander being hit unintentionally. Mental health concerns were also addressed in participant responses as well.

Steele speaks of his concern that someone could access the firearm of a concealed carry permit owner. Steele shared his concern based on his experience:

> Worse can happen...if people know you're carrying...and could try to get access to your weapon. It may not be the direct individual who has the permit ...who went to the training that they have access to it...but others are aware [of the weapon]. I had a case where a student grabbed the other person's firearm because they knew it [was there], and went after another person.

Steele was also concerned about the risk of a mentally unhealthy person gaining access to a weapon and using it for harm:

> When you frame it on a college campus...when we have an increase in numbers of folks who are mentally ill, mentally disturbed, that's the group that I'm concerned about. Who could get access to someone's weapon/firearm…who did obtain [the permit] appropriately...to harm themselves or possibly others?

Amy shared an experience of which she was a part. Amy shared:

> We had a young man who was battling some mental health depression kind of stuff and had been drinking. He had broken up with his girlfriend. [The police] had scares with him and guns before already. When the police showed up, they found that guns were unlocked and everywhere. There were handgun...there were hunting guns...everything. And…so we have this young man [who] was really upset...was drinking...now is armed and in a fraternity house.

Although Amy explained her concerns with mentally unhealthy persons gaining access to a firearm, she did not begrudge responsible gun owners their right to carry:

> So, I guess, there is an issue of access. But to me, what weighs more heavily on me is the mental health concerns. How can we address those more properly? Versus…we have gun policies in place and have laws…again, people who can carry and be safe about it... do your thing. But, finding a way to cut the ones off that really shouldn't have access to it.

Cliff spoke of the risk of access, by speaking of a hypothetical scenario that he could see happening in a college campus environment. Cliff shared, “There are certainly risks associated with how you conceal that weapon. Is it safely concealed? If you lose your backpack, and your gun’s in it, that seems like that is [a risk] if it's not personally attached to you.”

Other participants were concerned about accidents happening with a concealed carry firearm. Bob and Fred spoke of accidental discharges, or unintentionally hitting a bystander during a shooting threat. Fred asked, “What if it goes off in some young girl's purse?” Bob said, “I would say we just have more lives that potentially need to be saved because there's going to be more [of a] possibility for people accidentally getting hurt.”

Participants supporting CCOC responded to these concerns. Doc shared his thoughts:

> The only risk that I have ever considered is if I take off the concealed weapon, I’m usually locking it in the cabinet. And, the only risk there is somebody

> knowing that I had it in the cabinet, and somebody stealing that weapon. Otherwise, I don't consider it a risk.

James used a drinking and driving analogy when addressing access as a risk. "On a similar note there's access to vehicle keys when someone has been drinking or doing drugs. And that's resulted in a pretty well-known problem of people driving under the influence of various substances."

The risk of students with mental health issues gaining access to firearms was voiced by many participants. They were primarily concerned that these individuals would do harm to themselves and/or others. Steele said:

> My emphasis really was a circle or close circle...when they know you have it [a firearm]... So, if someone has a bad day, or they're not taking meds [prescribed to them] and they're depressed...for harm to self, harm to others...and they know that's an accessibility issue right there. I just think it's too dangerous.

Amy explained how mental health issues combined with alcohol and drugs is a concern to her, saying, "It's when you start mixing these other things, like people with mental health concerns/disorders, people with alcohol, you and them having the guns involved is really becomes concerning." Amy continued her explanation by noting that those with mental health issues may gain access to firearms legally because there is no psychiatric evaluation required in obtaining a permit:

> I think mental health issues are concerns…are something that can be hidden. It's not a visible thing most of the time. I don't know what the process is to get your permit, so I don't know if they sit there and ask you...and be evaluated. I don't assume you have to have a psychiatric evaluation. That's something that, if you very much believe and value the right to carry, you are not going to go off and [say], "I have depression problems, or I'm bipolar, or I drink a lot."

Amy said college populations are more likely to have mental health issues, and that the issues are becoming more prevalent on campus:

> We know in the state we have a higher suicide ideation rate, especially among men, who I would assume have more of the permits to carry. And, we know that more and more students are coming to campuses medicated and with mental health disorders.

Concealed carry on campus supporters also addressed the concern over mental health issues, and the risk they present. Elizabeth sympathized, but had a different take than Amy on this group being able to obtain a concealed carry permit:

> I have a family member who's severely mentally ill, and I do understand the fears surrounding [the chance of] instability at any moment. That said, the process to get concealed carry, as I understand it, is in-depth. When you're taking a class, if you seem unstable, they can deny you the opportunity to get your licensure.

Elizabeth also noted that it was impossible to keep every person, who may have mental health issues, from obtaining a firearm. However, it is less likely to hide it within the gun community because they keep an eye on each other:

> There's no way to guarantee that every single person, who has access to a weapon, is completely sound of mind and judgment. But, my experiences with the gun community is that they keep an eye on one another, and if there's any suspicion of any potentially dangerous behavior, they hold that person responsible.

Some participants stated that if there is an increase of persons with mental health disorders, then that is all the more reason to carry a firearm for protection. Kent remarked:

> If the argument is that mental health issues are increasing, then that means it is all the more important to be prepared for such people to attack us. So, that’s all the more reason to be...for more people to be...prepared for self-defense.

Alyssa noted something similar, “I would say specifically about the issue of CCOC, that if someone has a mental illness and they want to cause harm, then they are going to find a way to do that regardless.”

James recognized that mental health has been involved in campus-shooting incidents, but believed that this is the reason to allow CCOC:

> Mental health was clearly an issue in just about any one of these mass shootings. If there are dangerous people out there who can arm themselves, and are willing to violate the law, then, hopefully we get them help before this becomes necessary. But, if they get to the point where they are going to into public and start hurting innocent people, I think I, and many other people would absolutely want to be able to defend myself against that sort of thing. Because what other defense would you have against that?

Doc explained that he believed the medications that some students are taking might contribute to bad judgments, as they have done in prior mass shootings:

> We also have students who are, and have been, taking psychoactive drugs for years. I think that in light of a lot of these recent mass killings in the country, they are identifying the fact that all these people had some type of drug in them. Whether it be a prescribed drug or not, I mean these prescription drugs are going to alter brain chemistry and perhaps effect the person's ability to exhibit sound judgment.

Sean spoke about the importance of acknowledging that mental health is an important thing to consider:

> It's a fair criticism. Newtown is a classic example. This young man clearly was unstable and had access to apparently his mother's guns if I understand that story correctly; and look what ensued. I think it would not be a stretch to say [that] any case [where] we have mass public homicide like that, even if it's just heat of the moment anger, nobody is thinking clearly when they are mowing down fellow human beings.

Anti-concealed carry participants paint a risky picture involving access, accidents, and mental health issues. They were particularly worried about someone who is mentally unstable gaining access to a firearm. They believed colleges are places where students can experience many stressors, and that these stresses could trigger mental health issues, which can be exacerbated by access to firearms. Dangerous situations present themselves when this scenario exists. This is interesting because the same things are concerns for

those supportive of CCOC. However, the proponents thought that the prospect of mentally unhealthy people gaining access to firearms was a good reason for permit holders to be able to carry. They cited the mental health of the perpetrators of campus-shootings, and would not want to be defenseless in such a situation.

The impact on the concept of educational mission. Participants unsupportive of CCOC generally believed firearms on campus would inhibit an environment of free exchange of ideas and concepts, create a heightened feeling among campus constituents, and could impact the faculty, staff, or student evaluation process. Participants supporting CCOC responded by saying that IHE are not unique, and that the education of the rights and freedoms of owning firearms that come along with carrying firearms, should be supported by IHE. Other participants spoke of the benefits and the risks to campus and personal safety that CCOC brings to bear on the community. Participants spoke of the purpose and mission of IHE, and whether CCOC was conducive or contrary to this mission. Participants took the opportunity to respond with an alternative view.

Steele stated that the presence of firearms is counter to the educational mission of IHE, particularly MPU:

> So, you ask yourself the place of these firearms is counter to the educational mission of a lot of institutions. I mean Middle Pacific [values] access for all...but I don't think that access means your firearm. And, I don't think there's a place for it.

Amy agreed. She thought that they are places where freedoms are nurtured:

> An institution of higher education is a place where there is a freedom of thought. You are learning, you are developing, and you are growing. It is the place where your opinions can be respected. Everyone's opinions [and] everyone's ideas are respected.

Amy then wrestled with how to respect everyone's freedoms and rights, but not knowing how CCOC would fit in to that. Amy explained:

> Then, having to wrestle with....do we allow students [their] Second Amendment right to carry arms on campus? Which is interesting. So, I think that's where I battle. This whole nostalgic view about what campus life is. How we want to keep it, and preserve it, and it be wholesome and intellectual and developmental. And, how do we do that and start taking away freedoms, especially at state institutions?

Amy eventually concluded that she did not think college campuses were places for concealed firearms. This was based on her experience. However, she acknowledge that this was still a tough situation, and that perhaps not so cut and dried. She thought that a definitive line in the sand was hard for her to draw:

> Where do you draw the line? And who gets to make the decision? And, I still come back to this experience with my fraternity. Do I want some of those men carrying? Do I think they should? No. When you start taking away certain freedoms, what else are you taking away? Where do you draw the line? I think that's just difficult. And it was a really tough situation.

Cliff spoke to how he thought CCOC changes a common practice on campus – evaluation:

> It changes the potential dynamic of the free exchange of ideas and information. And, agree or disagree, it changes the conversation around evaluation. Being able to be honest with anybody…and I wonder if they have a gun in their desk. And I'm gonna come in and say I think you are doing a pretty lousy job? It changes the risk of high-pressure situations.

Participants supporting CCOC responded to the idea that it was not compatible with the purpose of IHE. Kent spoke about the concept of a campus environment, and how it is not always the place people envision. He addressed what he generally sees and hears when a campus-shooting incident occurs, saying that the reality is that these places are not more immune to threats than other places outside the university. Ken explained:

> After every one of these incidents, the media will always find at least one person to say, “I never thought this could happen here.” Every single time. In other words, there are always people who think this is a safe place. It doesn't even register that it's not a safe place. I think that's why Virginia Tech was so significant, because people think a college classroom is a safe place.

Alyssa believed CCOC does not threaten the educational environment. She believed that firearms are not a nuisance because they are only used on rare occasions. They are not used to solve normal disagreements or grade disputes:

> In the gun culture, there is the idea that your firearm is for use when your life is legitimately in danger, and not when you're having a disagreement with the professor about a grade. I've never heard of the situation being escalated like that on any of the college campuses that allow concealed carry.

James responded similarly, making two points. One is that he does see the need to ensure campus safety because personal safety is still an issue. However, he has not seen proof that concealed carry is a distraction. James said:

> I have heard that a lot. And, I think saying that the mission of an institution of higher education goes against the possession of firearms in the same situation. I think those are two separate issues. I think that also ignores the fact that personal safety is still an issue regardless of what you say your mission is. I feel like if firearms possession was an issue in a situation where you have heated debate, you would see a lot more instances of people shooting each other over arguments...or brandishing firearms over disagreements. And, you just don't see that.

Elizabeth agreed that CCOC does not inhibit the educational process on campus. This is mainly due to the fact that firearms are concealed; therefore, they are not out in the open distracting others. Elizabeth explained:

> When concealed carry becomes a distraction for the educational environment, then I would give that more consideration. Right now I just want to dismiss that concern because if I don't even know who on campus is concealed carrying. It's apples and oranges. I don't know that those are related. I think that I've never had this be a distraction in a learning environment.

Participants embraced higher education’s purpose of fostering an environment where students can learn about many different subjects, ideas, and concepts. Some

participants said colleges are places where students learn much about themselves as well. They believed that these are places that should support the education of freedom and empowerment, and they are opportune places to learn about firearms. Stella shared how it could be facilitated:

> It feels like if we're educating people, we are respecting people and their independence, and their freedoms to do what they want, [then] we are empowering everybody to have their own voice [and] do their own thing in this space. [If that] feels like something like you're ready do...we are here to help you educate yourself about it.

Doc also believed that firearms on campus would not conflict with the educational mission. He believed the subject of firearms should be just as much a part of the educational process as any other. He thought it could help more people to understand firearms, and to possibly reduce the anxiety and fear some have toward them. Doc responded to the argument:

> Absolutely not! They’re doing the opposite thing right there. They are the ones that are shutting down the opportunity for dialogue, learning, and in the long run, education. They are the ones shutting it down. In my opinion they ought to be teaching this stuff in public schools.

Doc used an example from his youth, and his experience with firearm education early in his life:

> Starting in elementary school, I plainly remember [in] seventh-grade a life science teacher brought in a shotgun, and a rifle, and a handgun into his class and showed those to us to explain the difference between those weapons. And I can remember him showing the class how they operated, and what they did. He did not have any ammunition with him. I clearly remember that, and I think that ought to be going on in every public school.

Doc continued as he explained how this education can help make people feel more comfortable around firearms. He believed that not knowing about them is what perpetuates the fear of them. Doc said:

> So, when they don't understand them, then they fear them. So, I think education is the key...and certainly the dumbing down of America is not the answer. What's the point? I thought the purpose of the school was to teach people anything and everything. What is the big secret? We should be encouraging the knowledge and understanding of the safe use of firearms. I think it's important that we teach people about these things, not keep them in the dark. I'm very passionate about that. I think that's important.

Sean agrees with the concept that higher education's purpose is to teach responsible citizenship. He says that this is evolving, but he is worried it is not as much a part of the higher education mission as it has historically been. Sean responded that concealed carry goes against the purpose of higher education, and why this is worrisome to him:

> I just don't see it. I think the historical mission of the academy, of universities, has changed considerably. We are much more into the tech or trade school mode then we used to be, even 100 years ago. I've even given talks on this. The historical role of universities was to train responsible citizens who then could do X or Y or Z. That's now been inverted. It is the technical piece, and I think the responsible citizenship part is the...I don't think it is gone...but I don't think it is nearly much of a focal point as it used to be.

Kent believes concealed carry is a less distracting option than another constitutionally-protected way to carry a firearm; open carry (carrying a firearm in a holster outside of one's clothing). He says this would cause more of a distraction to the academic environment than concealed carry. Moreover, he says those worried about distractions should consider this option, and realize that concealed carry may be the best one for everybody. Kent explained:

> I would also add that gun-control advocates need to be very careful because if concealed carry is banned on campus...and this very well could happen in [this state] as well...open carry is a very constitutionally-protected way of carrying a firearm. We may see people start open carrying on campus if concealed is banned. That would definitely change the academic environment.

Weighing the benefits and risks. Some pro-concealed carry participants acknowledged much of the same concerns non-supporters of CCOC had for the types of

risks that could accompany CCOC. Their responses explained why these risks are either no more significant than other things (e.g. mixing driving and alcohol), or were not seen as risks at all. In the previous sections, pro-concealed carry participants stated the benefits of allowing CCOC outweighed the risks of banning it. In this section, participants supportive of CCOC spoke directly about the benefits outweighing the risks. Participant responses of those concerned about the risks of allowing CCOC are also included.

Alyssa spoke about her perspective regarding the benefits and risks, ultimately saying that the benefits outweigh the risks. She noted that risks are minimal because there is no statistical evidence showing responsible concealed carry permit holders are using their weapons for harm. Alyssa shared:

> The extensive research that we have done…concealed carry is already allowed pretty much everywhere else. Permit holders are not perfect. However, statistically, it's a tiny little portion of the population that does anything bad like that. So, I think that the benefits far outweigh the risks.

James agreed the benefits outweigh the risks. He states "I would say the benefit substantially outweighs the risk if we're talking about people who are generally law-abiding." Elizabeth also agreed on this point, but adding an economic analogy:

> I don't think the risk outweighs the benefits personally... and I think that's where it comes from. In economics there is the cost benefit ratio, and if the cost is the lives of 33 students over the risk of maybe accidentally shooting your foot…I don't know.

Other participants concerned about risks of allowing CCOC also agreed that the benefits outweigh the risks. Martina spoke about her initial concerns with CCOC, especially if students used it to resolve disputes. However, she later found, after researching the issue that concealed carry permit holders were not involved in these

situations, and they just wanted to defend themselves. So, Martina recognized that the benefit of feeling more secure outweighed the inaccurate perception of risk that she previously held. Martina responded:

> If people have weapons, and then all of a sudden they get really angry or get in a fight with someone, they might just lose their mind and pull out their weapon even though they have the appropriate permit. After thinking more about it [and] being more intentional with a little bit of my research, I came to realize that's a very rare case and that the people do have weapons that are doing it correctly with the concealed carry. They actually are peaceful and don't...they aren't seeking out to cause violence or create it. It's more so for own their personal reasons or protection.

Fred did not think that the benefits outweighed the risks. He noted how a worst-case scenario impacts his perspective:

> One mistake in one second and somebody's dead. To me, that doesn't justify it for me. Sometimes guns just go off. Does it happen very often? Probably not. But that one moment when it does, and somebody dies...that is the stuff we see on TV.

Cliff had similar thoughts regarding benefits and risks. He explained how he thinks the lethality of a firearm can elude someone until it is used. He said the consequences of using a firearm could be devastating, and have a large impact on the shooter. Cliff shared:

> I think that's maybe one of the other risks is that the consequence of lethal weapons. They are so extraordinarily high. Either [they] critically wounded someone or worse. So it just seems like it elevates the consequences or behavior just off the charts to me. Best case, even if you have got your concealed weapon, and run into a bad situation and you shoot the person…you killed somebody.

In this section I explored participants' use of safety as a rationale for either supporting or opposing CCOC. Participants spoke specifically on how CCOC contributed to or inhibited their feelings of safety, and the benefits and risks of allowing CCOC. Participants who believed CCOC provided benefits to safety noted themes of campus and personal defense, serving as a deterrent for criminals, and acting as an

equalizer when someone may be outmatched by size, strength, number, or force. Participants who did not support CCOC pointed to the risks to safety: misidentification of the perpetrator, improper use of the firearm, lack of training/preparation, and the culture of the campus population (alcohol, drugs, partying, access to firearms, and mental health). Periodically, participants responded similarly to the viewpoints given by those on the other side of the issue.

The Influences on Participants' Concealed Carry on Campus Perspectives

To better understand all the varying views on CCOC, I asked the participants to speak to experiences that influenced their perspectives. Participants identified mass shooting incidents, personal experiences, family influences, and cultural experiences. Participants on both sides of the issue would sometimes identify similar experiences as being influential in forming their opinion on CCOC.

The Impact of Mass Shooting Incidents

Mass shooting incidents influenced both the proponents and opponents of CCOC. These incidents made some participants wary of having more guns around to potentially contribute to more gun violence, while other participants said these incidents were reasons to support CCOC. Participants included incidents outside of the higher education environment as well. However, they used these events to emphasize the implications of the risks and benefits that might arise by allowing others to carry concealed firearms.

The campus-shooting incidents of Columbine High School in 1999, Virginia Tech (VT) in 2007, Northern Illinois in 2008, and the more recent Aurora movie theater and Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting incidents in 2012, were referenced by

participants as having some influence on their stance. Martina described how the Columbine High School shooting incident in 1999 made her uncomfortable with the presence of firearms on campus. Martina explained:

> I would say the Columbine shooting would be a highlighting incident. You know, that affected and killed so many people...and after learning and hearing about Virginia Tech and different other shootings, I would say that has really shaped my uncertainty with having weapons around campus.

Fred explained the impact the VT campus-shooting incident had on his views. He pondered whether someone could have stopped the shooter, but concluded:

> I look at incidences like VA Tech, and I see two ways you can look at it. Guns are horrible, look what they did. Or, if you can carry, would somebody have stopped that person? I look at it as guns are horrible, look what they did. Guns kill people.

Amy did not change her opposition to CCOC. She thought police officers were the ones who should be carrying. Amy said, "I think, I wish someone was there to stop it. But in my mind, I think, police officers are the people who have this authority versus someone just pulling a gun out and starting to shoot."

Adam shared experiences he had at a previous university that impacted his position:

> I was working at a small private college in the suburbs of Chicago when the Virginia Tech incident happened. I was sad because of the deaths and the harm that happened on [that] campus. But while here at MPU, Northern Illinois had their shooting on campus. I had been on their campus a number of times for work, and had a lot of friends and colleagues who worked on that campus. I was probably much more impacted in that capacity. Like, wow, now it's happening to people I know.

Adam indicated that these incidents made him sensitive to what was happening at his institution. He shared an example of how it affected others at MPU as well:

> I think a month later we had a scare in this building, and we had all the police officers running around with assault rifles. A bus driver reported that he saw

> someone with a gun walk into the Student Center. So what did we do? We all stood at the Info Desk looking to see what's happening. Like, why are police running around?

Steele says that mass shooting incidents reinforce his opposition to CCOC each time another one happens, citing the Sandy Hook shooting:

> [Shooting incidents] just support and reinforces that position. And, when you look at particularly Sandy Hook, it is a tragedy. But once again [it is] that mental health piece. When you look at that individual...and I've always said the [we need to] increase emphasis on gun control. Let's look at mental health...let's invest there.

Bob spoke about the Sandy Hook shooting and how he thought it influenced others. He thought it has made people reevaluate the issue:

> I've reevaluated [it] in that regard, but not softened. I think one thing that's good about Sandy Hook...and good is not the right word because nothing was good about Sandy Hook...but, I think more people are willing to talk about it. That's good because conversation [is] the first place to start coming up with a reasonable solution.

Participants supportive of CCOC are influenced differently by these incidents than participants unsupportive of CCOC. These participants feel these incidents are reasons to have concealed carry permit holders in a position to protect themselves, and possibly others. Stella knew individuals who were at VT, and she has tried to understand what they have gone through. She wonders if CCOC has kept MPU safe:

> I think that the human part of it is where I really struggle. Just knowing people that have gone through such horrific things that I could not relate to...that's incredibly powerful, and it makes me think twice. If there wasn't concealed carry, would something like this happen?

James explained how these events influence and reaffirm his support for CCOC. He said:

> I would say that it reaffirms my beliefs. I need to make sure that I do not hang out in places where people prohibit me from carrying a firearm. Because those areas seem to attract the worst of this sort of thing...because if for no other reason…the convenience of the person who just wants to hurt a lot of people.

Doc said mass shooting incidents show that more people need to carry. He related this to his position at the university, saying, “I go and stand in front of a class of 90 students. And, you never know which one of those people has a few screws loose out there...and the thought has crossed my mind.” Although Elizabeth has reexamined her position after many of the mass shooting events, she indicated that they have not change her stance, saying, “Good opinions are not static, and good opinions are constantly being reevaluated when you have new information. My reevaluations haven’t really changed where I stand, except maybe to reinforce my prior held opinions.”

Mass shooting incidents obviously influenced participants on both side of the CCOC issue. However, they seem to only serve as reasons to reinforce their beliefs, and even intensify them at times. The incidents resonated with many participants, as they imagined themselves in a similar scenario. Doc thought these scenarios were relevant to his position as a faculty member at the university. He could not help but wonder about the possibility of a student in his lecture being mentally unstable and capable of something similar. Mental health was a driver for opponents of CCOC as well. Bob and Steele cited these mass shootings as a need to regulate guns more, making less likely that individuals with mental issues could obtain firearms. Although these influences affected both sides, some were motivated to take self-defense measures, while others called for more legislation to help confront the problem.

Participants’ Personal Experiences Influence Their Stance

Participants shared personal experiences influencing their CCOC view. Participants shared their close calls with violence. This involved themselves or someone they knew. They explained how these experiences contributed to their support, and even

advocacy, for CCOC. Elizabeth felt vulnerable. This feeling led her to be more concerned for her safety:

> At MPU you take all the tests in a building that is across campus. You could take the test at certain times...and it closed at 9 PM or 10 PM. And, it was at night that I was walking alone after dark, back from taking a math test, and I received an emergency text from MPU PD saying that five minutes earlier there had been an armed robbery in that parking lot that I was standing in. If I had finished my math test five minutes earlier, I would have been there.

Kent stated he was rather uninvolved in the CCOC issue initially:

> It was an issue that really was rather irrelevant to me through most of my college career, through my Bachelors degree, through my Masters degree, and probably a couple years into my PhD. It was completely irrelevant. It was an issue that if I heard someone talking about, I just didn't even want to discuss.

He explained how one significant event changed his ambivalence. It was the Virginia Tech campus-shootings incident. He explained:

> It became the most important issue to me because one of my friends was killed at that shooting. And, I said, “This isn’t just a bunch of people talking in the hallway, this is a life-and-death issue”. I guess I’m trying to say it's an issue that isn't really important until it's important.

This event compelled Kent to support CCOC and become an advocate and prominent voice in the national debate. Kent shared that after the Virginia Tech:

> I spent a lot of time with his [Kent’s friend] family that week, when his family came to visit campus and take care of everything, and explaining to them that [my friend] was a good guy. He wasn't killed because he hurt somebody or did something wrong. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. And, getting the story out there connected me with media. I've become kind of a representative of the movement to support CCOC because I've got a personal connection to the issue. I could present myself, present my case, and talk about the issue well. [It] is pretty much what started a “career” in talking publicly about concealed carry...in support of it.

The VT campus-shooting also motivated Alyssa to support and advocate for CCOC:

> I lived in the dorm where the first shooting happened. Where the first student was killed. And, so instantly, I was thinking, “What could have happened?” And, “Are my friends are okay?” So, I called one of my hallmates, and she had told me that

> someone was shot and killed in our dorm. I was shocked. I never pictured something like that happening...especially where I considered home [to be].

Sean was also impacted by the VT and Sandy Hook mass shooting incidents, and knew friends and colleagues in both cases. Sean believed these incidents showed how prohibiting CCOC can be disastrous. While Sean does not own a gun, he is still in full support of others who conceal carry because of the implications it has for safety:

> I'm a graduate of Virginia Tech, which in some ways ought to make me argue from a different perspective. I obviously wasn't there at that time. I was long gone. But, I had a number of colleagues… people who I did graduate training with who were still on the faculty there [at the time]. I would argue because of that, I think gun-free zones are dangerous only to the law-abiding citizens. So I would say that has influenced me.

Sean also had a connection to the Newtown story as well:

> My sister-in-law has a close friend who taught at Newtown. She had a son who was killed. So, certainly in some ways it is pretty close [to home]. Now, I should couch this in a sense that I don't own any guns. Even in the gun cabinet at home. So, again you have sort of this hybrid…I don't have a vested personal interest in carrying my own handgun on campus. I don't even own a handgun. I don't own a shotgun, or a rifle, or anything.

Dave said although he has never experienced somebody pulling a gun on him, he thought some every-day experiences, in his role as a faculty member and department chair; influence him to be against CCOC. Dave discussed these experiences and why he was concerned about CCOC in light of them:

> As an individual faculty member, and as a department chair, I've seen circumstances personally and have heard of circumstances where students get upset about things. The notion of throwing a weapon into a potentially volatile mix is a…it's not something you want to go to work thinking about.

Participant Perspectives Shaped by Family Members

Participants discussed being influenced by grandparents, parents, siblings, and extended family members. Sean recalled that firearms were a part of his youth, and that

his father played an important role in exposing him to, and teaching him about, them. He said firearm safety and training was of significant importance:

> My dad had guns and he was very serious about gun safety [and] proper training. On occasion, we would go shoot skeet or Coke cans. He was very rigorous about gun safety, etc. And, I think there is a lot of wisdom to that. Not everybody gets it, in terms of receiving the training.

Doc talked about his early years of hunting, and how firearms played a central role in his family history. Doc recalled, "I grew up around firearms. My father took me hunting when I was very small and a child...pheasant and rabbit hunting...and firearms have been in the family. I grew up learning to hunt." Elizabeth spoke about the influence her father's words had on her during a visit to MPU's campus before she was even a student. Although not significant at the time, they resonated with her later:

> I remember when I was in high school and I was visiting MPU with my parents, my dad made a comment like, "I am so glad this is a concealed carry campus." And, it didn't really register with me why that was. My dad was in the military. The more time I spent on campus...and I lived on campus the first two years so I spend a lot of time on campus...the more I'm in favor of the idea.

Stella's father was a police officer, and was also in the military. He influenced her position on the right to carry a firearm. She said:

> Growing up in a family where we would talk about controversial topics like this, [it] kind of introduced these topics early to me. But my dad was in the military, and my dad is also a retired cop from Long Beach. So, we lived in California for a while. So, my dad's views on concealed carry are obviously very pro. My mom is pro-concealed carry too. So, I didn't get a lot of con arguments growing up.

Kent noted that his father was an ex-police officer, and his uncle also owned firearms. However, Ken explained that even though he grew up around firearms, there was not much discussion on the topic. Kent recalled:

> I grew up around guns, but only shot once or twice when I was young. So, despite having people around me that were pro-gun I guess you could say…and

> [it] never really registered for me until this point. Just an additional kind of historical view on…almost no interaction with guns until this day...at about 30 years old…so, a huge gap in my life where it just never came up at all.

Much like Elizabeth, Stella, and Kent, Cliff's father's occupation required him to carry a firearm. Cliff spoke about his father, and his own experience of shooting many different types of firearms as he grew up. He said because of his upbringing he was familiar with firearms. However, even though he had as much experience with firearms as any other participant, especially those who support CCOC, he is opposed to firearms and doubts their value. Cliff said:

> I had a father who was an FBI agent. I grew up surrounded by firearms. By the time I was probably seven or eight years old. I probably shot every firearm that was available... machine-guns...shotguns...everything. And, learned how to do it very safely. But now, over time I developed a very strong opposition to firearms. I personally don't understand the value that they bring to people.

In this section, participants discussed what influence family members had on their position of supporting CCOC, and on firearms in general. Some were influenced by family members, recalling interactions and conversations, especially when they were younger. While others were influenced little by family members; however, they still included some family anecdotes involving firearms. Family influence provided the foundation for some participants to continue to have firearms, or support them, in their adult lives. However, despite Cliff's vast experience of shooting a variety of firearms with his father when he was younger, he began to separate himself, and even opposed them.

Cultural Influences

Participants coming from rural environments grew up around firearms for hunting and self-protection. Participants who grew up in urban areas such as New York City and

Miami saw firearms used for violence. Some participants recalled being raised in spiritual environments, which were not conducive to owning firearms. Others, who were not supportive of firearms, still made attempts to acknowledge that people raised around guns found them to be an important part of their culture. They asked, however, that those who were not raised in their culture be given consideration as well.

Doc recalled being raised around firearms. It was a way of life, and firearms were a part of the extra-curricular activities at school:

> When I was in high school I was on a rifle team. We had an actual team in our school, and we traveled and shot against other school teams just like basketball team would travel...or a baseball team. Growing up around firearms, they became second nature to me. It wasn't an oddity, it wasn't a novelty, and it was just a part of the way of life.

Stella was raised in a similar environment:

> So, I grew up in a small town, I had 17 students in my graduating class in a rural community...agriculture-based...very conservative in nature. So growing up in a family who is conservative...growing up in a town that is conservative...and then coming to a state school...I think that I haven't been challenged very much on the [opposing position].

Fred also grew up in a rural environment, but he does not support CCOC. He said he grew up around hunting, and was familiar with firearms. However, even with a background similar to Doc's and Stella's, he could not pinpoint any particular reason that explained his feelings about firearms:

> I grew up in [a Midwestern state]. I'm going to say I was a hunter, but I've never shot [a] rifle in my life…only pheasants…so mainly shotguns. I grew up, again, not to fear guns, but to be cautious of them. I think it would take a pretty powerful situation in my life for me to go the other way.

Martina does not feel comfortable with hunting animals, but she can understand how it may be necessary to control some animal populations:

> Growing up, I wasn't for people having guns. And, I think that's how I was raised in my family and, I'm also a vegetarian, so, I'm definitely against hunting. I understand hunting to regulate the populations of deer or elk, but if it is hunting for sport...I'm just not really for just shooting things.

Steele understood that others grew up in a culture that supports firearms as a sport and for self-defense, and that it is part of who they are. However, Steele wanted acknowledgement that this should be a two-street, meaning that those who are raised in that culture need to understand that others may not have been raised in the same manner. Steele explained:

> I also understand...I don't want to minimize this...I do respect...as far as a culture concern ...communities where...that we've living around firearms is part of that culture and they were raised to be safe with firearms...and the outdoors. They live all the way out...certainly carry to protect yourself and everything. I understand that, and I definitely respect different cultures.

Amy recalled how she grew up, and how spirituality played a role in her views on gun safety. She says this means that she was not willing to take a life:

> I was raised in the spiritual relation of life...is that it's a gift, and that's sacred…and it's not our responsibility to decide when people are born and when they die. To me, that's a big one that I'm not willing to mess around with. And, maybe that is what is influencing me more than anything...is a spiritual piece. I don't want to be responsible for someone else's death.

Growing up in an urban environment formed some participants' position on firearms. Steele's experience growing up in a large city on the East Coast lead him to view firearms unfavorably. Steele recalled his childhood:

> I know the influence is definitely with my background...my makeup ...as far as growing up in [a large city on the East Coast]. In my relation to guns, [they have] been a form of intimidation. It's definitely the community I was raised in. In an urban environment…firearms are not [used for] hunting. There is no game, there is no outdoors, and it's not a sport. It's to commit crimes. So, when I see it, I just don't want to be next to it.

Adam grew up in a similar environment. He said firearms used around him were for a similar purpose:

> I grew up in [a large city on the East Coast], everybody brandishes their guns. You can honk your horn the wrong way and someone pulls out a gun and points it at you. I don't honk horns at all. I have learned my lesson. My dad had a gun pulled on him, and I was like, "What is wrong with people?" In terms of my household, I think I grew up in a space that was not anti-gun, but we weren't gun-friendly either. In the city itself...I would say...when I'm watching news in Miami...and they show neighborhoods...and they say this person got killed by a random bullet…that's my perception of guns.

Participants shared how mass-shooting incidents, family members, and being raised in certain cultures have influenced their feelings on firearms. These perspectives are important to understand, because they had implications in forming the participants' attitudes toward firearms, and they can help understand their stance and rationale toward supporting or not supporting CCOC. Mass shooting incidents at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois, Columbine, Sandy Hook, and the Aurora theater shooting shaped positions on firearms. These incidents were used by both sides in their reasoning for or against CCOC.

Personal experiences were a part of the feelings of many participants. Some were affected by a close call with violence, by a mass-shooting incident, or by common experiences in their job. Grandparents, parents, siblings, and extended family played some role in attitudes toward firearms. However, some attributed their main influence to something else – their personal experiences.

Finally, culture and the ways in which participants were raised influenced their views on firearms. Some were raised in an agricultural or hunting environment and became familiar with firearms at an early age. Others were raised in an urban

environment and were witnesses to gun violence. And, yet another participant was raised in a spiritual environment, which made her feel uncomfortable around firearms.

Constituent Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future of Concealed Carry at Middle Pacific

In addition to the above influences that formed the participants' views, I wanted to explore the role they believe university administrators play in CCOC, and how these people support their particular position on CCOC. Participants shared what they thought the university could be doing to support their particular perspective on CCOC. These suggestions are important to consider, because they help inform administrators what campus constituents think should be happening on their campus.

University Approach Toward Concealed Carry

Elizabeth was not aware of what steps the university had taken to support or oppose CCOC. However, she did say that she was not sure it was the university's role to do so. Elizabeth said, "I have never heard anything [the] university sanctioned that's been negative or positive; in favor or against it. And, I'm not really sure it is the university's job to educate people on this." Stella also had not heard anything the university's position in opposition or support of CCOC. Stella offered a reason why this may be:

> I think that the institution has been kind of quiet on that it for better or worse. I don't know there is probably some strategy to that...of not speaking up too loudly for it. I would want to know their reasoning better.

Steele agreed that the university administration had a strategy to deal with the topic. He thought they wanted to possibly reassess concealed carry on the campus. He said, "We

have been utilized as the [example] for other places. We've also been very active in trying to be aware of the drawbacks of being a concealed carry [institution]."

Adam shared that he thought the university was neutral on speaking about CCOC:

> I would say our campus has been very neutral...not taking a stance. And, part of it is they don't want to upset any funding. There is a whole development piece that comes into it. They're dealing with funding concerns as their primary priority. They have been afraid that taking a stance on this, and other sort of issues that are controversial, would somehow risk funding. So, they have sort of stayed on the sidelines.

Adam wanted the university to take a stance on this subject, and he wanted them to explain their position -- whether it is in support or opposition -- so they could then better educate the campus. Adam shared:

> I think in terms of concealed carry weapons in particular, I don't think they've done anything. Maybe it's been too neutral. Maybe sometimes I think it's okay for campus to...for our board of regents and our president to say actually this is not a policy we support...and we are going to go to the state and fight against this. That would be a great statement. Or, to say this policy we support...and we want to fight for this...and keep this. It would be interesting to see how the campus could take a position, and then sort of educate people on why the administrators are taking the position one way or another.

Bob stated what he thought the university's approach had been in the past, and that he could possibly understand why their position seemed to be understated. Bob said, "Kind of weak. [However], if I wore an administrator's hat, I would maybe understand why it has to be that way." Cliff offered a couple of possibilities as to why he was not aware of the university's policy on the CCOC issue:

> I can't say I know a lot about the institution. So, that tells me something. Either that I am not paying attention...and is probably the most likely circumstance or explanation. The second is that I don't know there has been a lot of…it hasn't crossed my radar screen as being something being discussed very much.

Amy knew that the campus police department helped secure firearms for students who brought guns to campus, but she did not know what else the university offered. She wondered if training opportunities promoting gun safety existed for concealed carry.

Kent said that opinions were helpful, but ultimately, research should drive decisions. He stressed that a public university still needed to be aware of and to uphold its constituents' rights:

> Yeah, I think the bottom line is it's good to take input from faculty, staff, etc., but it should be on a research level, not on an opinion level. What does the research tell us we should do? If you want to call yourself a research institution, maybe you should be listening to the research. Opinion is just opinion. It is just that. Just remember that they are a public institution, and you can't take away rights.

Some thought the university was too reticent in expressing support of or opposition to CCOC, and offered reasons for this discretion. Participants thought the university might want to monitor the national CCOC debate before solidifying their position, or might be worried how their position could affect their funding sources. Others noted that the university provided safe storage of firearms, but were not aware of any special trainings/workshops that would promote concealed carry safety or awareness. Finally, one participant expressed that any policy implemented by a state institution should be informed by research, and great care should be taken to protect the rights of the institution's constituents.

Participant Suggestions for How to Support Their Beliefs Regarding Concealed Carry

Supporters of CCOC shared their perspectives on what the university could be doing to support their beliefs. Elizabeth shared, as stated earlier, that she was not sure the university was supporting or opposing CCOC, and she was not sure they should have

much of a role. She thought in order to support her, they should continue this approach saying, “I just would hope that they are not doing anything to restrict it, even if they're not doing anything to gain support for it.” James responded similarly to Elizabeth, but echoed Kent’s comments on the importance of observing the individual’s right to carry. James said, “Let people do whatever state law says that they are allowed to do and not try to restrict it further.”

Stella offered a suggestion on what the university could do to foster more discussion on the subject of CCOC:

> I think maybe just a bigger conversation. I mean, I just think talking about things and having things out in the open rather than ignoring them is a better way to [address] something. Like, same-sex education, or marijuana use...something like that.

Sean was also supportive of having a larger discussion about CCOC, and being inclusive of all perspectives:

> That could be a part of a conversation that happens on campus on a regular basis. I think people that are not interested, or never would be interested in carrying those weapons, ought to be aware of why is it that we have this policy. It should be [that] it is important enough, and I would argue for both camps, it ought to be important enough that we talk about it on more than one occasion.

Sean stressed it was important to be inclusive of other perspectives, and that it was certainly a part of living in the society we do. Sean said:

> We need to do a better job as institutions of understanding. Social contract would say I'm going to sacrifice some aspects of my autonomy because we're going to do things together. Now that has implications both for the prospective gun owner, and the individual who is not comfortable with that.

Participants not supportive of CCOC had ideas for ways the university could support their views. Martina shared a way to increase awareness of CCOC, and how safety can be improved:

> I think it should be part of orientation. I think students need to be aware of what this policy is, because I definitely wasn't...what students are able and not able to do. Tell those who don't carry guns, or even would cross their mind to have a gun...what it means...and what that process looks like to them to be able to carry a gun. I think there should be a training also, like an additional campus-wide training for those who carry...how to do that responsibly. So, that there is an understanding on both sides there.

Cliff suggested he might feel more comfortable with CCOC if permit holders received training specific to campus situations, and to possibly supplement it with non-violent response training. This may improve the odds that the firearm would only be used as a last resort. Cliff added that trained permit holders could potentially benefit campus safety as supplementary security.

Amy talked about respecting the right to carry, but wanted a larger discussion about carrying on campus. She offered the suggestion of creating programs that focus on safe concealed carrying practices. She used the other programs the university offers as example that promote education and safety. Programs on such topics as binge drinking and driving impaired:

> Is partying wrong? Is drinking wrong? No. Is it right? But you can do it sure, yeah. We just ask that they do it responsibly and in a safe environment. I feel like it's the same with this gun piece.

Fred said he would be in favor of programming that would offer him more in-depth information on CCOC:

> Yeah, if they want to set up programming for people that feel the way I do, I would probably attend. At the end of the day, I know this is a hot issue and they can't cater to everybody, and I get that, but, if they were to set up education, or forums, or sessions to go to, I would probably go to.

Adam talked about his lack of awareness for CCOC. He stated that he is not necessarily worried about concealed carry permit holders, but is worried about seeing a firearm. He says he is unprepared to witness that situation:

> So, this idea now with concealed carry...and folks being able to carry weapons...the people who are probably carrying and have the license aren't the ones you have to be worried about. But, at the same time [if] you are going to see a gun and how are you going to react...potentially to someone who has a license, and you see a gun…those are dynamics as an administrator that I'm definitely not trained for.

Dave wanted congruency in the CCOC policy. He stated there are different policies for different parts of campus. He argued it made little sense to allow firearms in classrooms, but not in residence halls and dining halls. He wanted a policy that made sense for the whole campus. Dave said:

> So, the University policy saying it's okay in some places, not okay in others is what really troubles the faculty. This distinction they are making between housing in and dining halls is really arbitrary...and you know it...and we know it. So, I think that's really what irritates people is that the policy seems so inconsistent, or illogical. It doesn't cohere.

Some participants argued for having a larger campus discussion about CCOC. Bob said that he did not see much public discussion of CCOC. He and other participants wanted the university to organize a campus forum inclusive of all perspectives:

> I don't remember a great deal of organized public forums over it. Maybe it's more the discussions that are smaller? We need to have differently-minded people who can come [to] some kind of consensus even within small groups. And, then those are the people that can lobby legislatures. And, I'm not aware that the university has promoted any of those things.

Cliff thought this approach might be more beneficial and more productive if students lead this conversation:

> Let the students on our campus help drive that conversation. We are supposed to be transforming these young people into the future leaders of our country. And, people who want to make a contribution. We have a perfect opportunity to engage them in that conversation. It's a college campus. It should be. If we can't figure it out, I don't hold a whole lot of hope for the rest the world to figure it out. We should be the place where these things are being tried. We are perfect places to be proving grounds.

Cliff used an example from his personal life to illustrate how it is important to have dialogue with those holding alternative viewpoints. Cliff emphasized the importance of recognizing that we have more in common than we are different, and these are places where we should start the conversation. He shared a story involving his neighbor and himself:

> My neighbor is an ultra-conservative pastor in an evangelical church. We could not be more [opposite]. It's not possible to be further a part on just about everything. We meet over beer once a month, and we talk about evolution, abortion, and gun rights. The reality is that [with] every single conversation we realize we have a lot more in common than we are different. That's how it's going to work. It's when people like us realize that all this background noise that's going on around it...that's not what's going to get it done.

In this section, participants shared perspectives on how they thought the university could be supportive of their feelings regarding CCOC. Proponents of CCOC wanted the university to respect their rights, and not restrict them. This was especially important to them because MPU is a state institution. Some suggested that there be a larger, more inclusive conversation about CCOC.

Those unsupportive of CCOC offered suggestion on how their beliefs could be supported. They wanted more training and programs available that would increase their awareness of CCOC, and possibly ease their minds on the subject. They also emphasized a desire to simplify the policy, and to make it a campus-wide policy. The idea of having a larger, more inclusive campus discussion was also emphasized. They thought that this would encourage discourse, and help to discover that we have more in common than we think. Opponents of CCOC ranged from being unsure of what the university is currently doing in regard to it, to thinking that the university was being neutral on the topic.

Supporters of CCOC said that the university's approach should be based on research and constitutional rights.

Participants who are unsupportive of CCOC suggested that CCOC be included in new student orientation in an effort to inform more people about it. They suggested that trainings for permit holders should be more specific to a campus environment, as well as include training in conflict-resolution methods. They also said that the university should have one policy for the entire campus, rather than different ones for residence halls, dining halls, etc. Finally, they said a larger conversation about CCOC would be helpful, and that we all need to understand that we do share common goals.

Supporters of CCOC said they would like the university to continue to observe the state law. They also said that they would also like larger, more inclusive conversations, in an effort to ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute to the conversation. This would especially be the case for any initiative to ban firearms.

Researcher Perspective

I drew an immense amount of valuable information and experience from the data collection and data analysis portions of this study. It took nearly one year to collect and analyze twenty-five interview transcripts and dozens of institutional documents. It was a long, tedious process in which organization of protocols, logistics, and raw data was crucial to progress. At times it seemed daunting and unclear; at other times it felt exciting and rewarding. The interviews were all a pleasure. What I mean by this is that each participant was welcoming and eager to speak to me about CCOC. Each participant made me feel comfortable; which was most interesting because I was extremely focused on their comfort with the interview process, and me. Admittedly, I did not know what to

expect when entering many of these interview sessions, and felt they may not know either. However, within a few minutes of starting each interview, we had established a pleasant rapport. It was also interesting, and probably what made me curious about what to expect, that we established such a rapport given we were approaching a discussion about a traditionally contentious topic. It was obvious that I had wonderful participants who had patience with the research process, made themselves available for interviews, and were eager to speak about the topic. All these things made for an ideal researcher/participant interaction. I also credit the paradigmatic perspective employed in this study; constructivism. It allowed me to embrace these interactions with care and respect, and reminded me that it was important to establish a rapport with participants. Sharing my initial researcher perspective at the beginning of each first interview allowed for a space that embraced a transactional, conversational environment where I could be honest about my thoughts and feelings about the topic demonstrate that a transparent environment was priority.

As I spoke about in my researcher perspective in the Chapter I, I have always strived to be objective about any issue, and to learn about both sides. Because I was initially leaning against CCOC, I wanted to learn not only more about why I believed this way, but also why others thought differently. Perhaps these reasons are were why the findings in this chapter look the way they do. On one hand, I found much of what I suspected might be contained within these interviews. First, I found participants felt much passion about the topic. Second, I found that participants spoke of common arguments and rationales that surround this issue in the literature. However, I also found something I did not necessarily expect, but something that was a welcomed surprise and

something I wanted to highlight. I began to understand where participants with differing perspectives were coming from. I not only saw commonalities within my experiences and theirs, but between many participants' experiences.

I was excited and thought this could be valuable information for this discussion, because it was a new way to see this issue. Commonalities were not something highlighted by the literature. This was not something that was necessarily surprising to me. I know this is a polarizing issue, and like many similar issues, the idea of a common ground gets little attention. I decided to focus on the commonalities as a part of these findings. I found participants had similar lived experiences through culture, family, and motivations. I also saw participants showing empathy toward others, and demonstrating understanding of the other side, suggesting that we seek further understanding about each other's perspectives. They though that this is not only a good general practice to living in a society with others, but could also be particularly helpful within this topic.

Identifying and placing value on these commonalities probably has something to do with my perspective, and that I want to learn about both sides of an issue. I also have always believed in bringing people together and focusing more on what we have in common than what separates us. I was excited to take these findings and develop them as a part of the discussion section in Chapter V. The next chapter contains this discussion and is helpful in shedding some new light on the issue of CCOC.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, data from participant interviews were used to create themes. The preceding themes within this section helped inform the research questions of this study. These themes helped understand participants' perspectives regarding CCOC through

learning what experiences they have had with CCOC. Rationales used to support stances on CCOC included self-defense, campus defense, deterrence, constitutional rights for pro-concealed carry participants, and risky behavior of student populations, mental health, accidental discharge, and lack of training for those anti-concealed carry participants. Family, culture, personal experiences and mass-shooting incidents influenced participants' stances on CCOC. Participants shared what they thought is the university's approach on CCOC, and offered suggestions for what they could be doing to support their feelings on the issue. Suggestions included larger campus discussions, trainings on the campus policy for constituents, and campus-specific training for concealed carry permit holders. In the next chapter, I will analyze the findings and discuss the significance data as it pertains to existing literature, what it provides for new contributions to the issue, and implications for university administrators, and researchers.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter I discuss the themes developed in Chapter IV with respect to how these data help answer the study's main research question, how the themes fit into the literature, and how they contribute to future discourse on the topic. Implications for university administrators and future research are discussed. Finally, my Researcher Closing Perspective concludes this dissertation.

The research questions guiding this study were:

Q1: How do college students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners' perspectives influence how they make meaning of concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ1: What actual experiences have participants had with concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ2: What rationales do participants develop to support their stance for or against concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

SQ3: What influences participants' rationales regarding concealed carry firearms on (CCOC)?

SQ4: How do participants feel university administrators can support their particular perspectives regarding concealed carry firearms on campus (CCOC)?

Discussion

Through this study I explored how college students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners' perspectives influence their engagement with the issue of concealed carry

firearms on campus (CCOC). These perspectives have been under-documented in the empirical research, and the principle reason is that the main focus of the existing literature has been to highlight the narrower debate between CCOC supporters and non-supporters. This literature is largely grounded in national statistics on college-aged populations, statistics on crime, and gun ownership rates; and suggests that are only two distinct camps directly opposition to each other. However, presenting CCOC as a binary issue is of limited use to the higher education community because it limits what could be a useful dialogue that will help institutions deal with such policies.

The primary purpose of this dissertation was to co-create meaning with those who are enrolled at or are employed by an institution of higher education (IHE) in confronting this issue. I wanted to understand if those on campus reflected the same sentiments seen in the literature, and if through qualitative inquiry (i.e., interviews and document review) any new meaning could be found that reflects the perspectives and experiences of campus constituents because it may provide new approaches to dealing with the issue. Participant perspectives in this study include experiences, rationales, and ideas for meaningful engagement with the phenomenon of CCOC. My own journey was documented in my researcher journal, and was helpful in understanding how I continued to make meaning throughout this process. This journal informed my closing researcher perspective at the end of the chapter.

In the following sections I analyzed how these perspectives are similar to the larger discussion, as well as how my findings contribute new understanding of the topic. This new understanding, then, is intended to assist university administrators and student affairs practitioners in supporting their student, faculty, and colleague populations.

Similarities to the Literature

Participants did speak of many of the same concepts that exist in the literature with regard to where they stand on the CCOC issue. Moreover, they provided valuable rationale and experiences for their views. The literature and document reviews show that there are similarities between these 15 participants and the scholarship regarding the prevalence and reasons why some constituents carry concealed firearms on campus. In this section I highlight analysis of the interview data, which is similar to many of the concepts in the literature. Understanding those similarities is a necessary place to begin because it provides context as to where this study fits into the discussion, and provides a catalyst for analysis of new contributions to the literature covered later in this section.

Stances on concealed carry on campus. Perspectives on participants' stances with regard to CCOC in this study are similar to the literature in general. Siebel and Lott are two prominent scholars with opposing views on concealed carry in a national context, as well as on campus. These scholars tend to use national statistics to make inferences in order to leverage their argument and tend to focus on a pro or con stance. The empirical studies of Price et al. (2009), Thompson et al. (2009), Brinker (2008), Bosselait (2010), Burress et al. (2010) Fallahi et al. (2009) showed that campus constituents had stances on the issue as well. While many of the studies showed that constituents did not support CCOC, there was some evidence to suggest support did exist.

Within the current study, James supported CCOC, saying that he may need to defend his life in a very serious situation. There were also those who did not support CCOC, much like what has been found in previous literature. Fred was representative of that view, "I live in a world where I don't think I need to carry a gun around to be safe."

The student newspaper also provided data that are similar to the literature opposing CCOC. Taken in conjunction with interview data collected from participants, it is apparent that this study provides data that are similar with the literature regarding campus constituents at MPU, by showing a level of support and non-support for CCOC. This corroboration of data helped ensure between-method triangulation.

The data from this study to understand the experiences that shape these stances. This study provided the space to elaborate upon the journey to a perspective on the issue. As will be explored in the next few sections, the uncovering of participants' experiences helps to understand a person's journey and how they come to make meaning of the issue. In this particular instance, certain stances are as evident in this study as they are in the literature. However, we also see a more vivid explanation as to what is behind the understanding a stance on CCOC. Although, participants and constituents at MPU may have more of a reason to have a viewpoint given the permissive CCOC policy, it is still instrumental in understanding perspectives from those who are affiliated with an IHE. As suggested later, more research would be helpful to understand if those who are passionate about the issue are more so because they are at an institution allowing CCOC, or if the same may be the case at another institution.

Rationales used in the concealed carry on campus debate. Participant perspectives in this study were also similar to much of what has been written about in the literature regarding rationales for supporting or not supporting CCOC. There were similar sentiments within this study. Support and non-support for CCOC was represented in the interview and document data.

Rationales for support of concealed carry. A main rationale that supporters of CCOC used was that they had a constitutional right to carry a firearm. This is consistent with the literature reported by Usborne (2010) and Van Winkle (2010) that showed that constitutional rights protect a person's right to own and carry a firearm. Participants in this study who used the rights rationale spoke of the basic human right to self-protection, and that the Constitution supports those basic human rights. For example, Alyssa stated, "I want my right to self-defense, and that's my basic human right, and if you're going to take that away from me then you gotta have a damn good reason why you're going to do that." Using rights to support rationale for allowing CCOC also appeared in the college newspaper. When MPU was considering banning CCOC, constituents wrote to the school newspaper stating that it was their right as a law-abiding citizen to be able to carry their firearm.

Participants who were opposed to CCOC were not persuaded by the constitutional rights argument as a viable rationale. Two opposing interpretations are that Second Amendment is a means to protect an individual (person) or state militia's (collective) right to own and carry a firearm (Craven, 2010; Hock, 2009). As Dave saw it, the Constitution is an archaic document that should not always be taken literally and needs to be interpreted in the context of modern times. He specifically referred to the collective versus individual interpretations of the Second Amendment, saying it was meant to ensure militias, and not individuals, had the right to carry firearms. However, with recent Supreme Court decisions, such as *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), more credence has been given to the individual right interpretation. The Court's decision

contained plenty of nuances, and lends itself to a beneficial interpretation of both the individual and the collective argument, which may provide grounds for both arguments.

Participants who believed it was constitutional (i.e., a basic human right) used this rationale as one of their leading reasons why they support permissive CCOC policies. This is one of their leading arguments, and a crucial part of their stance. This argument carries much of the weight in the debate. This is evident with past challenges to concealed carry at MPU. It was through constitutional statute that the permissive CCOC policy was allowed to remain in place. It was one of the most important vehicles for those at MPU who supported CCOC to ensure the policy would remain unchanged.

Other rationales provided by participant supporters of CCOC included being a necessity for self and campus defense, to deter crime, as well as an equalizer against a larger, stronger attacker(s). Literature supportive of carrying a firearm tout it as a significant way to improve self and community defense, deter crime and mass shootings, and provide an equal playing field when confronted by a larger, or numerous, attackers (Lott & Mustard, 1997; Lott, 2010). Other studies asked about carrying generally, not necessarily on campus. However, these perspectives add to the literature because they show reasons for carrying on campus are similar to reasons off campus (Hepburn et al., 2007; Kleck & Gertz, 1998; Smith, 2003). Van Winkle (2010) also found support from students in the brief qualitative component of his study for CCOC because it can be a deterrent to potential campus-shooting incidents.

Participants in the current study who were supporters of CCOC addressed each of these concepts. Elizabeth spoke about the potential to deter potential mass-shootings. Alyssa saw CCOC as a benefit to campus safety, although she believed, for her, that there

was more likely a benefit for personal safety. Alyssa shared her perspective regarding how she believed CCOC could be a significant factor to level the playing field, should she be up against unfair odds. She described a scenario where she would need to defend herself against a larger attacker(s) making it imperative to be carrying her firearm.

Institutional documents showed some rationales supporting CCOC. The student newspaper and Student Government meeting minutes cited constituents asserting and using their constitutional rights, to support their lawsuit to thwart a campus ban that the Board of Regents and Faculty Senate were trying to pass. Other student newspaper documents cited rationales from campus constituents which expressed their support for CCOC because it would be effective in self and campus-defense, in deterring a campus-shooting incident, as well as equalizing the defensive abilities of all involved.

These data from participants and the school newspaper show multiple benefits for CCOC. While advocacy initially stemmed largely from the campus-shooting incident at Virginia Tech, and its continued exposure seems to be perpetuated with each new incident, participants drew on other smaller, more common, threats as well. Scenarios such as sexual assault or a robbery were referenced as a more practical reason for needing to carry a concealed firearm. It is apparent that some participants do not feel immune to criminal acts on campus, and should therefore not be prevented from the type of protective measure they might use if confronted with an off-campus threat. Participants saw these reasons as tangible and important to prioritize, because it can mean the difference between life and death. This also suggests that participants feel they are they best person to ensure their safety, because often the type of response required in these

situations needs to be within seconds rather than the minutes in may take for a responding authority to arrive.

Rationales for opposing concealed carry. Participants in the current study provided rationales for opposition to CCOC such as alcohol, drugs, mental health, inadequate training, and misidentification of perpetrator in a campus-shooting incident. Many of these are also similar to the arguments Siebel (2008) made, arguing drinking, illicit drug use, and mental health are all reasons why CCOC is a dangerous idea. Bob explained that undergraduates often experiment with alcohol, and that drinking can lead to behavior that is especially dangerous if firearms are around. Amy shared her concerns about drugs and alcohol on campus and the implications this would have if firearms were permitted. "We know that binge drinking or high-risk drinking [happen on campus]," she said. "We know the culture of high-risk substance abuse and other drugs." Steele was concerned about the escalating number of people who are being diagnosed with mental health disorders. He said this was especially concerning considering the substance abuse that happens on campus as well.

Siebel (2008) and Villahermosa (2008) also argue that allowing CCOC would create confusion among responding authorities as to who is the perpetrator in an mass shooting scenario, get more people hurt due to the lack of proper training a common permit holder would have, as well as increase instances of accidental shootings because more firearms would be accessible. Van Winkle (2010) also found support for some of these concepts in the brief qualitative component following his survey. Some of his student respondents believed the college environment was full of stressors. They were concerned about the lack of firearm training, and they indicated their concern that the

responding authorities would be unable to differentiate between a permit holder and an attacker. Amy mirrored the concern in the literature about the potential for the police to misidentify a perpetrator in a campus-shooting incident. She explained that the police could possibly shoot an innocent person because s/he had a concealed carry weapon drawn. Fred shared his concern about adequate training when it comes to a chaotic and stressful situation. He was unconvinced that many would be able to remain calm enough to use a firearm effectively. Finally, Steele spoke about the potential for accidents arising from having more firearms accessible. He was concerned about the inadequate storage of firearms contributing to unauthorized use.

Some of these concepts were supported in institutional documents as well. The student newspaper interviewed constituents who said they did not think CCOC would be an effective deterrent for potential campus-shooting incidents. These constituents also said CCOC would create an unnecessary risk and could lead to accidental shootings. The Board of Regents (BOR) and Faculty Senate were integral in trying to ban concealed carry on MPU's campus, citing an unsafe environment. However, their attempted ban was unsuccessful.

These data were helpful in understanding that those on campus have some of the same reasons and concerns when it comes to CCOC, as those studied in the literature. It is apparent that because many of these rationales are present in the literature, they are as important to those on campus as they are to the authors of, and other participants in, the literature. However, the rationales in these data provide more depth into why they feel this way. For example, understanding the perspective regarding how these participants and constituents made meaning of their safety was largely a part of their perspectives on

this issue. These beliefs stemmed largely from the kinds of risky behaviors and circumstances that exist on a college campus.

Prevalence and behavior for constituents carrying on campus. Bouffard et al., (2012) found that a policy that allowed CCOC in fact increased the prevalence of concealed carry firearms. James, Kent, Alyssa, and Doc all indicated that they carry or have carried on campus as a concealed carry weapons permit holder. James responded after being asked in our first interview if he would consider concealed carry, "Well certainly I would, and I do actually." Elizabeth and Stella are supporters of CCOC, but do not currently carry on campus. However, they indicated they are aware of others who do. While the data of the current study cannot account for prevalence, it does suggest that constituents will carry on campus if they are allowed because some participants said they carried, or knew others who carried on campus.

Institutional documents such as the student newspaper provided examples of support for CCOC. Specifically, in a campus poll, a large majority opposed a campus ban on firearms. This provides a good indication that some of these supporters could be carrying themselves, or are supporting others they know who do carry concealed weapons on campus. Again, this does not account for concealed carry prevalence on a campus allowing CCOC, but does suggest constituents will carry on campus if policy permits.

Hearing my participants' perspectives and experiences is important to understanding their rationales, rather than just whether or not they agree or disagree with CCOC. There may be certain prevalence apparent at the MPU campus because it does allow CCOC. However, this allowance may be more a prevalence in issue. Not to imply

that issue means dangerous or concerning, but that it needs to be addressed in a comprehensive and attentive manner because it is a visible topic on the campus. This study specifically provides data that uncovers how the issue acquires meaning, gives a better sense of how perspectives are developed, and increases understanding about participants' experiences. Knowing these things can inform higher education administrators in their approach to support constituents in regard to this issue at institutions that have, or will have in the future, a permissive CCOC policy by providing them first-hand transferable data from constituents to inform decisions. The next section provides further understanding and analysis of these perspectives, which will help higher education administrators improve their practices.

New Contributions to the Concealed Carry on Campus Discussion

Existing literature on CCOC focuses primarily on stance, rationale for stance, or the prevalence of concealed carry and mainly uses abstract arguments based on assumptions from national crime statistics, demographic data, and interpretations of the Second Amendment. These methods provide a surface-level and limited examination of the issue. The advantage of data collection methods of the current study (i.e., interviews and document review) is that it provides a more in-depth look at the perspective of individuals' lived experiences. The following section explores analysis of the new contributions that the current study provides.

Commonalities between pro and anti-concealed carry participants. The literature on CCOC suggests two distinctive, polar-opposite camps: those for, and those against a permissive policy. The data from this study suggest that the issue is not always black and white. My participants demonstrate that there are similarities these two camps

share: empathy with the other position and a common goal. Participants sometimes found themselves grappling with the CCOC topic and the accompanying issues. This was especially evident when participants responded to the main themes from the first interview. For example, participants supportive of CCOC were able to respond to five themes based on what participants unsupportive of CCOC were mentioning. This created an indirect dialogue between participants. It challenged them to think about other perspectives. I found that many participants were willing to acknowledge and even empathize with the other side's position. Also, it was interesting to see how participants of differing perspectives often were more similar than one would expect. The following sections uncover commonalities shared by participants of differing beliefs.

Role of common experiences. While participants either were supportive or unsupportive of CCOC, many seemed to be influenced by common things in their lives; family, culture, and awareness of mass-shooting incidents. Their interpretations of these influences obviously led them to different understandings of CCOC. However, it is important to recognize there are some similarities, as it may assist each side in understanding the other, and help foster effective dialogue and discourse. Evidence of the participants' commonalities is analyzed in this section.

Family experiences. Some participants had fathers who had at one point been in a job that required a weapon. Stella and Kent had fathers who were police officers. Elizabeth's father was in the military, and Cliff's father was an FBI agent. Although none claim this was what ultimately determined their stance, they recalled being raised by someone who carried a firearm as part of their work experience.

Elizabeth shared this experience about her father. She initially seemed to attribute his support for her going to a campus with a permissive concealed carry policy to his experience in the military, and did not pay much attention to the comment. However, after being on campus for a while, and learning about the issue first-hand, Elizabeth thinks that she agrees with her father.

Cliff recalled experiences with his father that involved shooting a firearm, but ultimately decided that he was not supportive of firearms. Cliff's story is unique because it shows that not all who oppose CCOC are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with firearms and thus why they would prefer a less permissive CCOC policy. Cliff's experience demonstrates that someone can have a great deal of responsible and lawful firearm experience, and still be opposed to the carrying of firearms. This story may surprise proponents of CCOC, but knowing that it is possible for those opposed to CCOC to have experience with firearms could help them understand that the opposing positions may not just be based on ignorance of firearms.

Culture experiences. Cultural experiences were similar between those who support CCOC and those who do not. Participants drew on experiences while growing up. Doc, Stella, and Fred grew up in agricultural and rural environments, where firearms were used for hunting. Doc spoke of how he was raised around guns, and that firearms safety was a part of his schooling. Stella spoke about her experience: "I grew up in a small town. I had 17 students in my graduating class in a rural community, agriculture-based, very conservative in nature." Fred spoke about his upbringing in Nebraska, where he grew up around firearms and hunting.

These cultural similarities are further examples of a connection between participants whose perspectives on CCOC differ. Fred illustrates that he was raised in a culture that valued hunting, and the important role that firearms played. Again, this shows that someone can have been raised in a culture that values firearms and hunting and still be unsupportive of CCOC. It also shows the commonalities in experiences that participants have. This can be demonstrated in discussions about CCOC, as a way to increase understanding and valuing others' perspectives.

Mass-shooting incidents. Mass-shooting incidents are also referenced by nearly every participant. Some shared more intimate experiences with these incidents, as they were present during one of them, knew someone who was killed in one, or were affiliated with the institution where one happened. Some shared their experience with these events more indirectly as being a member of a nation that shared in the tragedy. Kent and Alyssa were directly affected by the Virginia Tech campus-shooting, as they knew friends who were killed that day. Sean was a graduate of Virginia Tech, and still knew people who worked there. Sean also had family who were impacted by the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Adam had friends and colleagues who worked at a campus near Northern Illinois University during a campus-shooting in 2008. He had even visited NIU several times when he worked in Chicago.

Others spoke about experiencing campus-shooting incidents as an American citizen. Martina spoke about being impacted by the Columbine High School shooting incident in 1999. Fred, Amy, and Stella drew on their reaction to Virginia Tech to help describe how they were influenced. Steele and Bob spoke about how Sandy Hook affected them and how it stood out as a horrific tragedy

It is important to note is that the Sandy Hook incident occurred between many of the participants' first and second interviews. I decided to ask if this incident changed how they felt about CCOC. Each of the participants explained that their views had not changed, but in fact were even further committed to their current stance. It is apparent that these incidents do not create doubt in a current stance, but may in fact do the opposite.

These family, cultural, and mass-shooting experiences shaped participants' beliefs on CCOC. While participants ultimately developed different stances on the issue, the experiences above showed that some participants were raised with similar values, in similar places, and they experienced similar events either first or second-hand. Understanding their experiences shows that participants on opposing sides may not be so far apart. This concept brings to bear a new view of those involved with this issue by identifying that there are commonalities and influences among people who hold differing perspectives. This is important because it challenges much of the existing notions on the issue. Knowing of these commonalities can help see the issue in a new a way, and help facilitate more meaningful discussions on solutions. The next section provides further analysis of the commonalities of the participants. The following data are evidence that some participants are willing not only to consider, but empathize with, differing perspectives.

Empathy with other side's beliefs. I believe participants developed empathy toward opposing viewpoints during the course of the interviews, as they were asked to respond to themes the opposing side had conveyed in their first interviews. These instances demonstrated why another person may have an opposing stance. Steele spoke

of his respect for those who are supportive of CCOC. Martina shared similar acknowledgements, and thought it was important to show respect for another person's lifestyle.

In some cases participants wrestled with a definitive stance on CCOC as they considered how others may approach the issue. They would generally return to their gut feeling about the topic, but after they gave credence to the feelings of another. For example, Amy spoke about how it was important for her to respect the rights of others. Elizabeth showed empathy for the concern of concealed carry permit holders having the proper training for a stressful situation. Although, it ultimately did not sway her opinion, it did show understanding and validated concerns others may have. Sean explained the importance of understanding the other side, and being willing to empathize and ultimately compromise to get things accomplished. Sean drew on his understanding of what it means to be a part of society, and how civility is an important component to finding common ground. He explained how this is necessary to ensure a responsible discourse on a topic. Cliff shared an anecdote about his neighbor and he, which had a similar theme emphasizing the importance of understanding a differing perspective, and that there may be more in common than vice versa:

> My neighbor is an ultra-conservative pastor in an evangelical church. We could not be more [different]…it's not possible to be further apart on just about everything. We meet over beer once a month, and we talk about…evolution, abortion, gun rights. The reality is that every single conversation we realize we have a lot more in common than we are different. That's how it's going to work. It's when people like us realize that all this background noise that's going on…that's not what is going to get it done. And inevitably we find lots of things that [we have in common]. I'm at least of the opinion that although it would be easy for me to just continue to bash the other side on anything…but then you realize you're not that far apart. It's the media that's making us far apart, or the lobbyists, or whatever is pulling the strings. That's what is creating this division

> that in a lot of cases just doesn't exist. I mean it exists but not to the degree that we have been led to think it is.

It is apparent that the concept of empathy for the other side has potential for further effective communication within this discussion, as participants of differing perspectives shared this sentiment. Cliff's story illustrates that dialogue with a person holding an opposing position highlights the similarities and concerns present in both perspectives. His perspective is not unlike Sean's, in that he emphasized the importance of these conversations to understanding the common ground between one and someone with an opposing view. He thought that finding the common ground is more effective in finding solutions that both sides can live with. Cliff also blames larger forces such as media and lobbyists being at play in this discussion. Taking the time to understand each other through discourse and dialogue is something that comes through with Cliff's comment, and could be a beneficial way to navigate the issue on campuses. He also identified the influence of the national organizations, and the apparent political influence they hold. This seemed to resonate with him greatly and illustrated that these organizations are indeed a large contributor to the discussion. Cliff also seems to see these organizations as perpetrators of a polarizing view that generally does not show empathy toward those with differing perspectives.

Common concerns. The common goal to improve or ensure safety is an apparent commonality among participants. At the heart of each of their rationales, they all advocate safety. Participants who support CCOC believed allowing people to carry would ensure personal and campus safety. Specifically, they thought personal and campus defense could be ensured by allowing permit holders to carry on campus because it would be a reasonable way to respond to, deter, or equalize a threat. Participants

unsupportive of CCOC feel allowing people to carry would undermine safety. The reason for this is that firearms mixed with elements of a college campus environment (i.e., alcohol, drugs, mental health, accessibility) is not conducive to safety. Safety is perceived differently by participants; however it is a common goal shared by participants supportive and unsupportive of CCOC.

These findings further the conversation about CCOC and include: opposing sides in the CCOC debate often seek a common goal, they share commonalities to a greater extent than previously thought, and there is evidence that each shares empathy for the other. These findings make it easier to understand that supporters and non-supporters of CCOC have experiences that are not completely foreign to each other, and that there may be more common ground than has been previously emphasized in the debate and the literature. Moreover, participants showed empathy for those with differing opinions, often putting themselves in the other's shoes and surmise what might motivate or influence them. This may be beneficial to administrators trying to figure out ways to support their constituents, but may have been resigned to the fact it is too polarizing an issue to do it well. This data may be evidence of a way to shift the polarizing paradigm and begin to develop a discussion with commonalities at the heart of them.

The potential impact on student and faculty recruitment and retention.

The CCOC policy at MPU did not influence many participants in their decision to seek a degree, or take a university faculty or staff member, and most were unaware of MPU's concealed carry policy before, and even after, arriving on campus. Supporters of CCOC, such as Elizabeth and James, said they were unaware when they enrolled at MPU, but were later appreciative after they learned they were at such a campus. James was

proud to be a part of a campus that allowed concealed carry. Elizabeth spoke about how she was not aware when she applied to MPU, but that she wished it had weighed into her decision.

Dave was also unaware of the policy when he became a faculty member at MPU, so he said it did not influence him. However, he did say that it was not as much of an issue at MPU when he arrived. Dave also suspected it may be more of an issue for prospective faculty members. Dave shared a conversation he had with faculty outside the institution, illustrating why he thought CCOC could affect the recruitment of faculty. Doc also said he was uninfluenced in his decision to join the faculty at MPU. However, he did say that he welcomed the policy, and might consider leaving MPU if it were withdrawn.

While many of the participants were unaware or uninfluenced by the concealed carry policy at MPU, two participants were aware of the policy, and it influenced their decision to work or enroll in classes at MPU. Kent and Alyssa, now a married couple, both lost close friends at Virginia Tech in 2007. They became advocates for concealed carry as a way to ensure personal safety. Their advocacy supports the right to the same personal safety on and off campus. When Alyssa was looking for graduate schools and Kent was looking for a teaching position they selected MPU because it allowed concealed carry on its campus. Much like Doc, Kent also mentioned he may consider leaving MPU if concealed carry were restricted, saying, “And if they ever change it, well, I guess that’s going to change my opinion of involvement with them.” Alyssa also stated that MPU’s policy was a significant factor in her decision.

These perspectives are interesting because of the potential impact on recruitment and retention of constituents who place significant value on IHE allowing concealed carry. They even consider it a priority at an institution they are affiliated with. Conversely, those who prefer a campus that does not allow concealed carry may choose to leave MPU, or an institution with a similar concealed carry policy. These feelings may be frequently overlooked when considering CCOC policy. While some may guess that such a policy may influence students, faculty, and staff to affiliate themselves with an IHE, there has been little data to suggest it is actually influential. Knowing now that it can be influential to constituents when choosing to pursue, or choosing to remain, at an IHE, it would behoove administrators to be prepared to acknowledge and address the impact on recruitment and retention.

Participant recommendations for concealed carry on campus. Participants on both sides of the CCOC debate offered recommendations for how the university can support their positions. This section's contribution is the strength of its evidence. It includes substantial information that may be most useful to IHE administrators as far as implications for approaching this issue on other campuses.

***Larger campus discussions*.** Participants recommended larger campus discussions on this topic. This suggestion was shared both by participants supportive and unsupportive of CCOC. The larger campus discussion could help provide a place where many perspectives, suggestions, and concerns could be shared. Sean thought the discussion should happen periodically, and could even benefit those who have not thought about the issue much before. Cliff believed a conversation about CCOC was a

good idea, and even what IHE are supposed to foster among its constituents. Cliff also had ideas of who ought to lead this discussion; students.

Amy agreed with the idea of having a larger campus discussion about CCOC. She thought this discussion would be beneficial in educating people about the policy, observing constituents' rights, and how to make sure the policy is being applied safely. Like Amy, Stella likened the discussion to ones that should occur on other campus topics.

Increased awareness of the campus policy. Participants believed increased awareness about CCOC policies was important, and spoke of ways to help ensure that happened on campus. Fred said that educational programming should be increased around this issue. He suggested forums, and sessions that open up discussion, and educate more of the campus about CCOC. Adam also mirrored a need for more people on campus to understand the policy because it would help constituents be more aware and prepared for possibly seeing a firearm being carried on campus.

Martina recommended using orientation as a mode to help make constituents more aware of the policy. Like Adam, Martina's suggestion would help people have a background on this issue, and be prepared for the possibility of seeing a firearm and know why that might be. This suggestion stemmed from reflecting on her experience when she arrived on campus as a student, and said she definitely was not aware of the policy.

Simplification of the campus policy. Many participants said they would like the campus policy to be simplified. Two participants desired a policy that had fewer exceptions, as well as be more in line with what state law requires. Dave's interpretation of the policy is that there are too many sub-policies making it cumbersome to understand

and recommended more congruency in the policy. Dave said, “So the University policy saying it's okay in some places, not okay in others is what really troubles the faculty.” James’s response mirrored this frustration with the lack of coherence of the policy. His main concern is that having sub-policies restricting concealed carry permit holders from carrying their firearm does not fit with the larger instructional policy, which itself is directly derived from the state constitution. James explained his feelings, “Let people do whatever state law says that they are allowed to do and not try to restrict it further.”

Campus-specific training for concealed carry permit holders. An opponent of CCOC recommended optional training as a way to help them feel better about the policy. This training would help give constituents an increased assurance that permit holders had proper training specific to situations that may happen on campuses (e.g., a campus shooting incident). Cliff expressed his ideas of what training could look like, and how it may help him feel more comfortable with a current and enforceable policy that he does not agree with, which could help him feel more comfortable with the of training a permit holder. He observed, “ MPU is required by law to allow CCOC, but can we, for example, have a one-semester three-credit class on firearm safety that's really hard?”

Cliff also recommended supplemental training that involves conflict resolution education, in an effort to have other avenues to address contentious situations. Finally, Cliff suggested recruiting individuals who have done this to help increase security efforts on campus, and even work in a more formal manner with the university in these efforts:

> And maybe we take those individuals and we recruit them as our second security. Well all right, if safety is a big issue to you, you feel like having a concealed weapon is a part of that safety. How can we engage you in making the campus a safe place? By training you to be our second set of eyes. But in a really helpful way. The second set of eyes meaning recognizing students in distress, identifying

> with classmates, offering to help other people. Being a vigilante in the most positive sense of the word.

These first-hand perspectives provide insight into how constituents at an IHE that allows CCOC feel they can be better supported by their university. Both sides are asking for a larger discussion of the issue, which can bring more education and dialogue to the campus community. Middle Pacific University is used to a contentious debate that seems to surface after something has happened (e.g., banning firearms from the campus). It is apparent that this alienates and frustrates those who support CCOC. It also keeps others who are not as aware of the policy in the dark, and creates a possible frightening situation should they happen to witness a firearm (most likely an imprint under clothing) on someone around campus.

Both groups would also like to see a policy that is more coherent. This is another aspect that is irritating to many participants. They thought that increasing awareness on campus through programming initiatives was another way to help alleviate concerns when observing someone with a firearm. A suggestion was that this could be done possibly through orientation.

Campus-specific training was suggested to help ensure permit holders were prepared for situations they may encounter on campus. Although, there may be no way to make this training mandatory, it might still be a useful tool to provide optional training. In speaking with participants who are concealed carry permit holders, I learned about their utmost respect for compliance with firearm policy and laws, and their priority to observe firearm safety. I could see these participants possibly embracing some optional training, where they in turn would help train others in campus-policy compliance and campus specific situations. These suggestions and recommendations could be

implemented at IHE that allow CCOC. Next, I discuss implications for university administrators at IHE who currently have, or may be implementing, policy allowing concealed carry. I will also include implications for future research regarding CCOC.

Implications

The purpose of the current study was to understand better the perspectives of students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners regarding how they make meaning of CCOC, a controversial yet legal policy, at the university. I believe understanding these perspectives may help university administrators think about how to support their constituents. University administrators should consider these findings as useful information for how to offer support to those who are supportive and unsupportive of CCOC at those IHE that currently have a permissive CCOC policy, or may potentially have one in the future.

Support a Larger Campus Discussion Regarding Concealed Carry

The first implication that university administrators should consider is the need for organized campus discussions regarding CCOC. It is apparent that participants at MPU thought there was little university-supported discourse on the topic, even avoidance by the administration to some extent. Participants on both sides of the CCOC divide made this request. It is appropriate and necessary for a university to facilitate professional discourse, to examine all sides of the issue, and increase understanding. This would be a best practice for an institution that wants to be as informative as it can be about issues as controversial as a policy that allows CCOC.

University administrators should use the language and emotion of participants of this study to understand how their constituents might be feeling. They should use this understanding to begin to construct an effective way to facilitate a campus discussion. They should consider a few specific things, which would be helpful in this discussion. First, use these discussions to help clarify the campus's policy regarding how and when concealed carry permit holders can carry on campus. This clarification is necessary, because as the interviews confirmed, participants were frustrated and confused about the many sub-policies that restrict concealed carry in certain places (such as the residence halls, dining halls, and health center).

Second, university administrators should understand the commonalties among their constituents, who are passionate about this debate. The data provided in this study showed that participants were all concerned with safety and were deeply affected by similar events. Events like on-campus shootings, as well those tragedies that occur off-campus, were used by participants to rationalize their stance. Columbine High School, Virginia Tech, the Aurora movie theater, and Sandy Hook were particularly influential to many participants. While these participants also showed empathy for those who do not share their views by understanding and respecting their rights, concerns, and perspectives. Unlike how the pro/con perspectives are presented in the media, the participants were open to various perspectives. They asked for data and wanted dialogue.

Third, supporting a campus discussion could facilitate an open forum for concerns that either side may be having, and such a discussion would help administrators acknowledge constituents' feelings that they are being heard, and that their concerns are validated. Because the issue of CCOC is one that has been consistently present in higher

education since the Virginia Tech campus-shooting incident in 2007 and continues to be with each shooting incident, it is important to understand how the climate on campus is currently reacting to the issue. Also, because the campus population does consistently change, it would be good to understand how and if feelings have changed.

This data can help university administrators understand why a larger campus conversation is important, and how to approach it. It can also help in understanding that the discussion might be more effective when commonalities are emphasized and used to generate more efficient conversation. Using the forums to help foster campus discourse around CCOC would be a step towards helping support campus constituents.

Also, because the issue of CCOC is such a contentious and polarizing one, it may be necessary to be strategic when facilitating these discussions. Ultimately, administrators need to find legal ways to satisfy either side. It is a challenge to be sure. However, this is not the only polarizing issue institutions of higher education have dealt with (e.g., legal marijuana use). So, in addition to learning what constituents suggest about what could be implanted, administrators can look to how institutions have dealt with, or are currently dealing with, other polarizing issues. These could be useful models and offer solutions on how administrators navigated similar issues, and be of use in these discussions. Additionally, trained mediators could provide structure and help guide the discussion so the focus continues to be on the progress and development ideas, and to ensure it does not turn into a shouting match.

Permit Holder Policy Compliance

The participants, who either were permit holders or knew someone who was, were unwavering in their commitment to firearm safety. A second implication of this study is

that university administrators can appeal to a sense of safety at the same time that they are enforcing a legal CCOC policy. This in part, aside from proper training, is emphasized through compliance with the current exceptions of firearm policies not only on campus, but anywhere they happen to go with their firearm.

Those opposed to CCOC argue that this only represents those involved with this study, and cannot account for every other permit holder. This concern is valid, however it is important to emphasize that participants within this study demonstrated nothing that would strengthen a concern that licensed permit holders were in any way non-compliant with exceptions to campus and outside firearm policies.

While some permit-carrying participants disagreed with having these exceptions because they do not align with the state constitution, they are not defying them, they are objecting through legal and more conventional means. Abiding by policy is something important for university administrators to understand because it may help alleviate some safety concerns they have for allowing CCOC. The example of these participants at MPU can help understand behavior of some permit holders at an institution allowing CCOC.

Recruitment and Retention Considerations

A third implication for university administrators to consider is the potential impact on the recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff. Although many participants did say that MPU being a campus that allowed CCOC was not influential in their decision to attend or work there, Kent and Alyssa shared that it was the deciding factor in their decision. Dave shared how he has heard of colleagues at other institutions

remark how they would not be affiliated with such an institution. Kent and Doc commented that they would reconsider staying at MPU if the policy were reversed.

University administrators should consider these data when thinking about how a permissive CCOC policy can impact recruitment and retention. While the impact may be a smaller one, it could still be something to consider. When recruiting future students, faculty, or staff, a university may not overtly publicize that it may have a certain CCOC policy. However, it may be beneficial to have some marketing material that is designed to guide a potential student, faculty, or staff member through the background, parameters, and expectations of the campus policy. This could help alleviate those who may be concerned about CCOC; by seeing that it is an issue the prospective institution has approached seriously and prudently. It may also appeal to those who prefer attending an institution allowing CCOC for the same reasons.

Retention of students, faculty, and staff may also be affected by having a CCOC policy. Those who do not feel comfortable being affiliated with such an institution may look for reasons to leave. Conversely, if an institution allowing CCOC reverses its policy at some point, supporters may choose to leave as well. Something that could help with the retention of students, faculty, and staff would be to provide support for those with either feeling. The larger campus discussions could help those who may be concerned about allowing CCOC to voice their concerns, and have their feelings validated. This forum could be where they learn more about the things the campus is doing to help ensure that concealed carry is being done safely, and possibly they learn to understand the perspective of those who choose to carry in an effort to be better informed about why they choose to carry.

Retention of those who are supportive of CCOC could be ensured through these discussions as well. Some participants supportive of CCOC expressed that they would reconsider their affiliation with the university if it reversed its permissive policy. This could help them feel like their concerns were addressed in a formal and public manner. While constituents with feelings on either side of the issue might ultimately choose to leave, some may stay because they respected the process the university took to thoroughly consider the feelings of campus constituents.

University Sponsored Training

The final implication of this study is that training should be introduced and supported by the university. Specifically, two types of training would be beneficial in ensuring a more informed campus. The first type of training the institution could be support of is of an educational nature. This type of training would be an organized session, designed to inform current or prospective students, faculty, and staff members of the background and parameters of the campus policies, as well as where they can go with questions and concerns. These trainings could be a part of a larger, more comprehensive discussion regarding campus safety. These could be opportunities to expand safety awareness and train people on how to report suspicious behavior and take other safety measures. Administrators may want to decide who they may feel most appropriate to facilitate these questions, but a suggestion may be student affairs personnel, campus police officers, and even constituents who carry their concealed firearms on campus. These sessions may be most appropriately held at student and staff orientations. Apparently, from data collection within the current study, MPU has not done these types

of trainings, and that has possibly lead to some confusion and lack of awareness of the campuses supportive CCOC policy.

A second training which may be beneficial for university administrators to consider was suggested by Cliff, one of this study's participants. This training would include non-violent tactics for conflict resolution and university specific firearm training. Some concerns participants who are unsupportive of CCOC shared were that those with concealed carry permits might not be prepared for an active shooter situation, or even a one-on-one confrontation. They also might be comforted knowing that training would emphasize tactics to diffuse the situation non-violently as a first option if possible, using a firearm as a last resort. Supporters of CCOC who actually possessed a concealed carry permit said that they were involved with safety and training beyond what is required to obtain a permit, and commented that their firearm was only there as a last resort.

A university specific training will be conducive to both parties. For those who are concerned about allowing CCOC, this training may alleviate concerns of proper use of a firearm in several potential situations. For those supportive of CCOC, and those who actually have permits, this type of training would be beneficial as a continued opportunity to train with their firearms. This may also present an opportunity for permit holders to ensure their community is continuing to comply with safety measures. Constituent permit holders could assist campus police officers, in the facilitation of these trainings. These trainings could be offered quarterly, or by request. While Cliff alluded to making these trainings mandatory, it may not be possible to do that without any supportive legislation. So, it may be more effective to offer it as optional, and request the expertise

of concealed carry permit holders to help facilitate the training. Also, optional training may create more buy-in from permit holders.

Implications for Future Research

It is important to note that some studies were published after this dissertation was proposed to the doctoral committee and did not inform this study's research questions, or interview questions. However, these studies are important to mention in this section to recognize their contribution to the literature, specifically the particular gap that this study identified; campus constituent views on CCOC. These quantitative studies expanded understanding of attitudes toward CCOC held by faculty (Bennett, Kraft, & Grubb, 2012; Patton, Thomas, & Wada, 2012; Thompson, Price, Dake, & Teeple, 2012), staff/administrators (Patton et al., 2012), and students (Cavanaugh, Bouffard, Wells, & Nobles, 2012; Patton et al., 2012; Thompson, Price, Dake, Teeple, Bassler, & Khubchandani, 2013). These studies help increase knowledge of the stances of specific populations on campus. Many of the results of these studies suggest that students and faculty are not in favor of CCOC, so the implications of this dissertation would be useful to that constituency.

While these studies are informative of constituent attitudes toward CCOC, there is still a lack of empirical research involving qualitative inquiry. This type of inquiry can continue to help understand student, faculty, and student affairs practitioners' perspectives and feelings on the issue in a more in-depth manner. Understanding these perspectives can continue to give university administrators the information they need to better support their constituents.

Future qualitative-based inquiry that is needed could include research of more cases. These cases may include other institutions that allow CCOC. This would give more insight as to how constituents at those institutions feel about the issue, which in turn helps to direct the appropriate training. Are they motivated by similar experiences and influences as participants within this study? A multi-case study examining multiple institutions would be useful in seeing how these institutions and its constituents might be similar or dissimilar. This could also help explain demographic, cultural, and geographical influences.

Another multi-case study could be conducted at institutions with differing CCOC policies. This study could help universities understand if differences in perspective exist regarding how these institutions' constituents feel about the issue of CCOC, especially due to their institutional surroundings. It could also lend support to or help refute any recruitment or retention implications by understanding if constituents are drawn to, or repelled by, institutions allowing CCOC.

Future researchers should consider how to be as accurate as possible when defining the type of weapons they are researching. As seen in the literature review section, it was sometimes difficult to delineate between what type of firearms were being discussed within many studies because it was not generally defined for the reader of the article. This could add to the problematizing of creating claims, which seem to be causal, but are rather loosely correlated due to the culling of broad information and statistics and lumping them together in order to make a point. The lack of definitions for the types of weapons being studied could also be unintentional. This could be because of an assumption of a common acceptance of what a concealed carry firearm is. Either way,

further researchers of CCOC should be intentionally transparent about the specifics of their inquiry.

Researcher Closing Perspective

I conclude this study with my closing perspective because it is important to reflect on my journey through this study, and understand how I continue to make meaning of this issue. I kept a researcher journal throughout the data collection process. This journal was used to record my thoughts in anticipation of the interviews, reflect on the content of interviews, and react to shooting-incidents, firearm policies, and changes to law taking place daily in the national landscape. I referred to my journal to help write this section.

The Importance of Challenging My Beliefs

As I stated in the initial researcher perspective in Chapter I, I had an uninformed opinion on CCOC. While generally supportive of the right to own and carry a firearm in many places, I thought to do so on campus was a risky proposition. However, it was based on little more than a gut feeling, and being somewhat influenced by others around me who thought the same way. It was only after studying the issue more within two classes (Public Policy and Current Issues in Higher Education) that I was challenged to not only speak with classmates who held differing perspectives, but to research what was written on the topic. This process helped me become more informed. However, I thought there was more I could learn, and that I could learn it through a research study on CCOC. This was especially important to me because I was raised to, and educated in the importance of, challenging beliefs, and to espouse fairness and understanding when developing perspective. I needed to know why I believed this, and if I was going to continue to feel this way.

Embarking on this study was important to understanding my perspective. It also helped me understand how others make meaning of this issue. When starting to research this topic, I experienced moments where I found myself empathizing with statements and arguments I read in journals. This happened obviously when I read of rationale and research presented against CCOC. I would say to myself, "Oh, this is the reason I feel this way, it's so obvious." However, I found myself also nodding while reading about the same things with rationale supporting CCOC. Statistics and national data on crime, firearm ownership, and demographics, as well as arguments based on inferences from these numbers were compelling to me from both sides of the debate. The more I read, the more I wrestled with where I really came down on the topic.

After months of research, I was excited to see how others developed their perspective on CCOC. I got to know my participants well in just a couple of interviews. I recorded thoughts prior to, and reflected after, each interview. I learned a great deal about each person and what shaped their beliefs. My journey continued through these interviews, and within interactions with the participants.

My Journey Continues

It was in interviews with participants who were supportive of CCOC where I was challenged to maintain a fair and open mind. As I anticipated many of the initial interviews with these participants, I would remind myself to put myself in their shoes in an effort to understand their experience and their perspective. I became increasingly better at this with each subsequent interview, and this was in part due to the reception I received, and interaction I had from each participant. Each of them was welcoming, and even somewhat eager to speak about this topic. Many did not know what I believed

about the issue when they agreed to be participants, and I do not think they even cared. Neither tone nor demeanor changed after I shared my researcher perspective at the beginning of each interview. This was something that made me more comfortable and I attribute to building a trusting rapport between us.

The content of the interviews was similar to much of what I had researched prior. Participants talked about self-defense, campus-defense, deterrence, and Constitutional rights. I was not surprised to hear these arguments. I had read many of these rationales that were used in the literature. However, it was their experiences, it was the looks on their faces, it was the gestures with their hands that gave me an improved perspective on *why* they believed this. I could understand more why they would want to defend themselves, especially when I am sitting there with a women (the case with a couple different participants) who is telling me she would feel safer in an parking lot, or at night, against a larger, stronger attacker(s). Or when another participant explained that firearms were a part of his culture and family since he was young. And, finally, when a participant told me he/she is a law-abiding citizen. If they wanted to really do harm to someone, why would they be following the rules and laws to obtain a weapon and then, to carry it? So, why is it they who causes concern for others?

I still thought of the common rebuttals to many of these arguments during these interviews, as it was my perspective for so long. However, I was able to put the rebuttals hold and weigh them more during these interactions because they made me pause and reflect on how I could see myself in these situations or that I could follow the logic. I think it was because my participants described their perspectives in a way, which

provided a grittier, vivid, and tangible look at their experiences. It was much more compelling than reading about percentages or statistics.

With all this said, I still am not sure I am have decided to unequivocally support CCOC. While I appreciate these positions more now that I have met and gotten to know some of the people who support CCOC and heard their perspectives, I cannot commit to this stance myself. I still remind myself of the risks involved with having more firearms on campus. However, I am not sure if I can commit to being unequivocally against CCOC. This is due to the challenges I forced myself into during interviews with those who were unsupportive of CCOC. For example, I challenged myself not to just nod my head when participants brought up a familiar argument against CCOC. I challenged myself to understand what these arguments meant to me now that I had much more background on the issue.

It was challenging for me to listen to participants who were against CCOC and not slip into some sort of outright head-nodding agreement session, where we just complained about the prospect of allowing firearms on campus. It would have been an easy thing to do with my previous beliefs about CCOC, as I tended to be against such a policy. However, through my interviews, I made sure I noted what was sticking out to me during the interviews, as some arguments no longer made sense to me. For example, the argument that student behavior is sometimes risky because they are experimenting with their newfound freedom, alcohol, drugs, and implying that these students would be reckless, is hard to reconcile anymore because these students are often too young (under 21 years of age) to even obtain a concealed carry permit. So, these students are being used unfairly to support an argument that does not involve them. Although, I have not

reversed position, or changed my belief, I have learned it is important not to get completely lost in that position. It is limiting to my ability to understand other perspectives, or to see value in "opposing" views. It is distracting to progress, and this is one issue that needs to see some advancement in discourse. For this reason, my belief has evolved. While I still believe CCOC should be approached with caution, there are ways to support those on either side. There is grey area, and there is compromise.

Getting Comfortable with the Grey

What I resonated most with were the moments were I found myself agreeing with participants from both sides, and asked myself, why there cannot be a solution in there somewhere? I was also impressed to hear participants talk about reasoning with the other side, and that there was more dialogue that was needed. They did provide solutions, especially with specific ways for administrators to support their beliefs. Much of those suggestions involved merely listening more, and facilitating larger discussion.

The ideas that came from my participants are a good start. What would happen once these discussions are implemented? What would happen if administrators and others encouraged, and subsequently progress, a dialogue that embraced a focus on commonalities instead of rebuttals? Would there be greater insight? Maybe it is time to stop fighting, to stop seeing right/wrong and black/white, to share our space, and to find solutions and compromises to this issue, and to find the grey. I need to challenge myself to continue to get comfortable with the grey, and I would encourage others to as well.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, further analysis of themes was conducted. This analysis took place in the form of a discussion of interview and document data. In some places the data

looked similar to that of existing literature, and was helpful in further understanding stances and rationales regarding CCOC. Further into the chapter, a discussion on how this study contributed new things to the issue. Specifically, identifying commonalities between participants, influences on recruitment and retention, and suggestions from participants for administrators regarding how to support their feelings.

Implications were provided for administrators currently at IHE with permissive CCOC policies, or may be implementing such a policy. Implications included having larger campus discussions about the issue, making campus constituents more aware of the parameters and background of the campus policy through trainings, concealed carry permit holder compliance with safety, and providing an optional campus-specific trainings for permit holders. Implications for future research included more qualitative case, or multi-case, studies at other institutions that could help give further insight into how constituents feel about the issue. Finally, my researcher closing perspective showed how I made meaning of the issue throughout the study, how I continue to challenge my beliefs on the issue, and encourage others to do the same.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY *of*
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

August 17, 2012

TO: Angela Henderson
Sociology

FROM: Maria Lahman, Co-Chair
UNC Institutional Review Board

RE: Expedited Review of *University Constituents' Perspectives of Concealed Carry on Campus: A Case Study,* submitted by Christopher Cobb (Research Advisor: Matt Birnbaum)

First Consultant: The above proposal is being submitted to you for an expedited review. Please review the proposal in light of the Committee's charge and direct requests for changes directly to the researcher or researcher's advisor. If you have any unresolved concerns, please contact Maria Lahman, Applied Statistics and Research Methods, Campus Box 124, (x1603). When you are ready to recommend approval, sign this form and return to me.

I recommend approval as is _____ 9/2/12
Signature of First Consultant Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is approved as proposed for a period of one year: 9-11-12 to 9-11-13.

_____ 9-11-12
Maria Lahman, Co-Chair Date

Comments:

25 Kepner Hall ~ Campus Box #143
Greeley, Colorado 80639
Ph: 970.351.1907 ~ Fax: 970.351.1934

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

University Constituents' Perspectives of Concealed Carry Firearms on Campus: A Case Study

Christopher Cobb, M.A.

Purpose and Description: Recent changes regarding concealed carry laws in Oregon, Colorado, Mississippi, and Wisconsin suggest CCOC has become a significant issue for IHEs, which have generally prohibited weapons on campuses. However, there is little empirical data exploring how students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners perceive these changes, their stances on CCOC, or how they rationalize their beliefs. The purpose of this case study is to better understand the perspectives university students, faculty and student affairs practitioners have about concealed carry on campus (CCOC), and in doing so better understand the rationales they develop for having these perspectives.

Conversations about this topic may involve more conviction, passion, and controversy than other topics. However, the risks inherent in this study are no greater than those experienced in other conversations one may have about the topic of CCOC. To ensure a comfortable environment, participants are able to respond to questions during the interviews at their own pace and comfort level, and will be in control of their responses and level of comfort with the researcher and the questions being asked. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions will use a pseudonym, and my research advisor and I will be the only ones with access to the audio recordings. Audio recordings of the interviews will be stored electronically on my computer, and will be destroyed within one year of dissertation defense.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference.

Information and findings from this study will be submitted for academic credit in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership program, and possibly for publication.

If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161. Also, you may contact my Research Advisor, Matthew Birnbaum, at 970-351-2598, or matthew.birnbaum@unco.edu.

_____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Researcher's Signature Date