

DISSERTATION

CAMPUS SECURITY DIRECTOR PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE INFLUENCE OF
CONCEALED CARRY FIREARMS ON SAFETY AT WYOMING PUBLIC
COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

CAMPUS SECURITY DIRECTOR PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE INFLUENCE OF CONCEALED CARRY FIREARMS ON SAFETY AT WYOMING PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Firearm violence is occurring on America's higher education campuses killing not only students but faculty and employees as well (International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, 2008). Even in light of this bloodshed, there is little accurate information available about the role that firearms play in preventing or exacerbating campus violence (Miller, Hemenway, & Weschsler, 2002). Wyoming community college campus security directors are specifically given the authority to allow, or not, concealed firearms on their campuses by state law (Wyoming Senate, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors concerning concealed carry firearms on their campuses.

Using qualitative research methods, the study was conducted utilizing semi - structured interviews with the seven campus security directors for each of the Wyoming community college districts. Smith's (2012) interpretative phenomenological analysis qualitative method of inquiry guided the data analysis. In accordance with an interpretative phenomenological approach, data analysis was undertaken to examine for patterns, trends, and themes that emerged from the campus security directors' responses. The analysis used personal and in - depth detail derived from individual interviews to describe the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of participants. Analysis of the data presented four super ordinate themes supported by fifteen subthemes.

This research yielded information concerning the possession of concealed carry firearms at Wyoming community college districts. Findings indicated that the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms would likely harm the overall safety of Wyoming community colleges. However, if proper vetting and training of persons carrying concealed firearms were to occur, campuses may be safer. Wyoming community college districts were considered safe places pursuant to participant responses, and no concealed firearms had been used in any Wyoming community college district to commit a violent crime. Campus security directors stated that possession of firearms by a victim would not have prevented any violent campus crime.

Campus security directors indicated that concealed carry firearms may be irrelevant to the safety of Wyoming community college districts. Rather it was the proactive stance and involvement of campus security officers that was important to campus firearm safety. The interview data yielded information and considerations for campus security directors, college administrators and all persons interested in firearm safety at Wyoming community colleges. This information may be used to assist in the crafting of sensible firearm policies at community colleges.

DEDICATION

This project culminates a long and rewarding journey. As in most journeys, it was not taken alone. Many people were of great assistance to me during this long path of study. They are many and numerous people who helped me along this trip. I am unable to thank each and every person who helped me in this course of learning.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

There has always been significant concern about campus safety and security (Thompson, Price, Mrdjenovich, & Khubchandani, 2009). National attention was drawn to campus violence in April 2007 when a senior at Virginia Tech University, Seung Hui Cho, killed 32 and wounded 17 people by use of handguns (Davies, 2008). In an eerily similar situation to the Virginia Tech Tragedy, on April 2, 2012, seven nursing students were killed and two wounded on the campus of Oikos University by a single gunman (Mohney, 2012). A lone gunman wielding firearms promulgated both of these tragedies.

In March 2012, a civil jury examined the Virginia Tech tragedy and held that institution responsible for the death of two students, awarding their families large monetary sums (Lipka, 2012). Further legal actions against Virginia Tech University are pending. While college campuses are comparatively safe places, the fallout from the Virginia Tech massacre is to make them even safer (Jost, 2007).

College campuses, while typically safer than their surrounding communities, are still vulnerable to violence (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011). Colleges and universities are easy targets for violent perpetrators (Boynton, 2003). Numbers concerning killings do not include the dozens of students, employees, and others who were wounded during campus firearm rampages. These numbers also do not include the harder to define, but just as important, mental problems often experienced by those persons exposed to firearm violence.

Significant violence has occurred on college campuses for decades (Miller, Hemenway, & Weschsler, 2002). Most Americans are aware of Virginia Tech University and the terrible loss of life that occurred there. Virginia Tech has become far more famous for tragedy than it

ever was for academics or athletics; the name Virginia Tech has become synonymous with campus firearms disaster. Unfortunately, Virginia Tech is no longer alone in experiencing the human devastation caused by firearms. National coverage of campus carnage at Northern Illinois University, Oikos University, and recently Casper College has illuminated deadly campus violence. This research will elicit and analyze the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors at Wyoming community college districts as it pertains to the concealed carry of firearms on their institutions.

Problem Statement

Thousands of violent crimes occur on campuses each year (Students for Concealed Carry, 2009). Firearm violence is occurring on America's higher education campuses (Miller, et al., 2002) killing students, faculty, and employees (International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, 2008) yet little accurate information is available about the role that firearms play in preventing or exacerbating campus violence (Miller et al., 2002). Society is concerned by school crime and in need of more complete data analysis to develop protection of institutions (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014). It is just such information that the researcher sought in this study.

Violence on campus is harming the learning environment of America's higher education institutions (Randa, 2010). Firearm fear and paranoia is "antithetical" to creating a climate where free and open academic debate and learning thrive (Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2007, p. 14). The issue of whether guns should be permitted on college campuses is presently a subject of vigorous debate and controversy (Birnbaum, 2012; Harnish, 2008).

During a two week period in 2008 a survey link was sent to member institutions listed in the 2006 edition of the Higher Education Directory ® with three hundred and thirty one members

responding (Midwestern Higher Education Compact, 2008). This survey specified that 87% of responding campuses indicated they had reviewed their security and safety policies (Midwestern Higher Education Compact, 2008). Further 19 % of responding campuses indicated they were having discussions on campus concerning the prohibition or allowance of firearms on campus (Midwestern Higher Education Compact, 2008). This issue is further complicated by the concealed carry of firearms (Birnbaum, 2012).

Advocates supporting the free carry of concealed firearms urge that campus firearm regulations would present obstacles to law-abiding citizens, but would not keep guns away from criminals who do not apply for permits (Birnbaum, 2012). Some gun rights proponents believe that prospective attackers might reconsider their actions if they knew concealed weapons were permissible on campus (Harnisch, 2008). These advocates argue that “gun free zones” do not work and stickers on campus announcing “no guns allowed” are really just announcing to violent criminals the absence of defensive weapons (Birnbaum, 2012). Campus announcements that higher education institutions are gun free merely provide a “reckless invitation” to psychopaths (Soderstrom, 2012).

Proponents of the second position favor restricting gun possession on college campuses. Such proponents argue that academic freedom would be hindered if firearms were allowed on campus (IACLEA, 2008). Concealed handguns would detract from a healthy learning environment; open discussion on critical issues may arouse passions and inhibit dialogue for fear of retaliation (Students For Gun Free Schools, n. d.).

The literature and other scholarly writings provide no uniformity of opinion. No clear path to a safer campus is provided. Like many controversial issues, campus concealed carry of firearms offers little common ground for compromise. While rational persons want safe college

campuses, the path to this safety widely diverges (Kahan, 2011). Advocates of both of these mutually exclusive positions “agree about the policy ends: the promotion of the health, safety, and prosperity of their communities” (Kahan, 2011, p. 7). A study on firearms at college campuses indicated that data did not “show whether guns at college confer a net benefit, impose a net cost, or have an indifferent effect on college communities” (Miller et al., 2002, p. 64). In 2012 this lack of college firearm safety is still true (Birnbaum, 2012). Despite broad based concern about campus violence, there is no consensus on how to best achieve safety. Even less is known about the role that weapons play in preventing or exacerbating campus violence (Miller et al., 2002).

It is unclear to what extent human tragedy on colleges or universities could have been minimized or even eliminated because law - abiding students and employees possessed concealed firearms (Miller et al., 2002). It is likewise unclear if a prohibition of concealed firearms on campuses would enhance firearm safety at colleges and universities (Wyer, 2003). This question becomes critical because colleges and universities must provide a safe environment for their students (Meloy, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of Wyoming community college campus security directors concerning concealed carry firearms. This study further seeks to examine how the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of these campus security directors might influence or inform practices concerning concealed firearms on institutional campuses. These perceptions, attitudes, and understandings may prove enlightening to inform college firearm safety practices.

Campus security directors are particularly good participants for such a study because Wyoming law gives them a personal, individual, and legal right to allow or prohibit firearms on their individual campuses (Wyoming Senate, 2011). This study sought closely to examine perceptions, attitudes and understandings held by campus security directors concerning the concealed carry of firearms. This study further sought to understand how campus security directors' perceptions, attitudes, and understandings might influence and inform practices concerning concealed carry of firearms on institutional campuses. The opinions of campus security directors as to the influence of concealed firearms on their institutions may provide an important piece to the overall college safety puzzle.

Research Questions

A quality research study must be guided by apparent, focused, and well-crafted research questions (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). To examine pertinent issues, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors concerning the presence of concealed carry firearms on safety at Wyoming community college campuses?
2. What are the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors concerning the absence of concealed carry firearms on safety at Wyoming community colleges?
3. How do these perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors inform their practice and approach to college safety as it relates to the concealed carry of firearms on Wyoming community colleges?

It is important to note that the first 2 research questions could have been encapsulated into a single inquiry. This inquiry could have sought perceptions concerning the presence or absence

of concealed carry of firearms. However, the researcher determined that it would be more efficacious to keep them separate. By maintaining two separate questions, the researcher freely allowed campus security directors to espouse either position concerning concealed firearms. Two separate questions did not promote one opinion over the other and allowed campus security directors to provide their perceptions, attitudes, and understandings in an unbiased manner. This study obtained valuable insights into perceptions, attitudes and understandings from college security officials.

Significance of Study

Firearm safety on college campuses is not a new issue. Moreover, while the literature is replete with different analyses of violence on campuses, none has taken a Wyoming community college campus security director focused approach. This research study adds to the scholarly literature by providing attitudes, understandings, and perceptions of Wyoming campus security directors.

Campus security directors are those persons arguably most responsible for ensuring campus safety and security at Wyoming community college districts. Campus security directors are responsible for the maintenance of a violence free Wyoming community college environment. The issue of firearms on campus is placed squarely upon the shoulders of these campus security officials (Wyoming Legislature, 2011). A review of the literature provides a paucity of information concerning the presence or absence of firearms on Wyoming's public community colleges. It is evident that little research or scholarly writing has been conducted concerning campus safety and security at Wyoming public community college districts. Wyoming college firearm safety concern parallels that of the nation.

The issue of concealed firearms on campus is an important societal problem and in need of further investigation (Birnbaum, 2012; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014). There exists in the literature a lack of uniformity concerning the presence of firearms on campuses as enhancing or impairing campus firearm safety (Harnisch, 2008). Much of the research literature reflects positions that are bifurcated and mutually exclusive with regard to concealed firearms. Unfortunately, these findings are not based on clear or consistent guidelines for firearm safety. The significance of this study has several facets. First, this study will add to the scholarly research by expanding both depth and breadth of literature concerning concealed firearms on Wyoming community college campuses.

This research is significant because it advances the perceptions, understandings, and attitudes of Wyoming community college district campus security directors. By understanding the perceptions and attitudes of campus security directors, community colleges may be able to establish protocols and procedures that increase firearm safety. A closer examination of this particular aspect of campus safety could lead to safer campuses and a reduction in overall firearm violence.

This research may also be significant to campus security directors, administrators, and other decision makers. These campus decision makers are responsible for providing a safe learning environment (Meloy, 2011). Campus security directors, administrators, and other decision makers may find this study useful in constructing and implementing firearm safety policies. This research may be useful to anyone interested in creating and maintaining a safe campus learning environment. This research may help inform and enlighten campus firearm safety practices.

The findings of this study will hopefully be published and disseminated to interested persons. Through anticipated dissemination, the information obtained by this research study will become a critical tool to campus security directors and other college constituents in enhancing safety on their campuses. This study is timely and necessary in light of human lives lost as a result of campus firearms violence.

Delimitations

Delimitations explain the borders of any study and indicate how the scope of the research is narrowed (Roberts, 2010). This study was conducted the summer of 2013 involving all seven community college districts in Wyoming. Seven personal interviews occurred. One interview was conducted for each campus security director at each of the Wyoming community college districts. This approach allowed one entire state, Wyoming, to be considered in the research.

Limitations

Certain limitations of this study should be noted. This study does not address issues that arise when handguns are carried in violation of a campus policy or state law. The illegal carry of concealed weapons was not addressed. In addition, the effect of a firearms policy on an institution's crime rate was not part of this study. This study did not address the issue of open carry of firearms on the safety of Wyoming public community colleges.

When discussing firearms and the concealed carry thereof, this study addressed handguns, which are capable of being carried in a concealed manner. This study did not address rifles, shotguns, or other long guns that cannot be carried in a concealed manner. The concept of "concealed carry firearms" is defined to mean the possession on or about the person, or in close proximity, of a handgun. By its very nature the possession of such a handgun is concealed and, therefore, not known to any other person.

As in any interview research, the participants provided information filtered through their personal views, beliefs, and biases (Willig, 2001). In addition, interviewees and participants have different levels of cognitive expressiveness and articulation (Creswell, 2009). The researcher successfully addressed those concerns noted above during the course of campus security director interviews by use of follow up and in depth questioning where appropriate.

Wyoming has the smallest population of all states in this nation. The rural nature of Wyoming is a limitation of this study. Wyoming community colleges have a low student population density on their campuses. The population density that is typical of all Wyoming community colleges is significantly lower than that of institutions with many more students. Also, these campuses are located in cities and towns of relatively small populations; their population density is different from a major city such as New York or Chicago. The population of campuses in Wyoming may be smaller than those of a mid-size or small city such as Billings, Montana. Therefore, information obtained during this study may or not be applicable to a more urban college setting.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Shootings on campuses have brought concealed firearm possession as it influences student safety to national attention. National media coverage of shootings at Northern Illinois University and Huntsville, Alabama, has firearm violence directly within the view of the nation. Shootings tragically affect universities and campuses across the nation by causing loss of student and employee life (Kaminski, Koons - Witt, Thompson, & Weiss, 2009).

There is little known about the role firearms play in violence on college campuses (Thompson, et al, 2009). Ultimately, the issue becomes one of concealed firearms existence on college and university campuses. Can law - abiding students, faculty, administrators or other employees in possession of firearms lessen, minimize or possibly avert the tragedy caused by a one gunman on campus?

Proponents of concealed carry firearms would argue that possession of a firearm by law - abiding campus constituents could reduce the number of casualties related to the violence. As noted by Cao, Zhang, and He (2008), the damage experienced by institutions extends beyond the death toll:

Although gun violence in schools is rare, it has devastating consequences when it occurs. It undermines the quality of learning experiences, it reduces the positive activities of people associated with the campuses, and it attracts negative media coverage. Local, state, and national newspapers and television swamp the schools to do stories on the incidents because gun violence is significantly different from less lethal forms of violence, such as fist fighting or even violence with a sharp weapon, like a knife or razor (Cao, Zhang, & He, 2008, p. 155).

Gun violence on college campuses results in incalculable damage to the institution as a whole. The implications of campus violence can affect mental health, fear, and learning success (Randa, 2010). This damage extends to not only victims, students, staff, and administrators but institutional reputation as well. Colleges and universities are easy targets for violent perpetrators

due to their population, minimal law enforcement, openness, and the anonymity of most campuses (Boynton, 2003). College campuses, while typically safer than their surrounding communities, are still vulnerable to violence (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011). Campus attacks usually last a short while, which provides virtually no time for law enforcement to mitigate the situation (Greenberg, 2007).

This chapter discusses relevant literature as it relates to the concealed carry of firearms on higher education campuses. The first discussion will deal with state level actions in Wyoming and neighboring Colorado concerning the concealed carry of firearms on institutions of higher education. Next, this chapter will consider both Wyoming and Federal constitutional issues as they relate to the carrying of concealed firearms. Following that will be information about actions taken by the Wyoming legislature concerning the carry of concealed firearms. The next section of chapter 2 will contain information about relevant decisions of the United States Supreme court concerning the right of firearm possession. The lack of guidance in Wyoming concerning concealed carry firearms on its community colleges will be explored.

Subsequent to this lack of guidance discourse will be a discussion of concealed carry firearms as enhancing college safety. Following this section will be an exploration of how the absence of concealed carry firearms enhances safety. Next, this chapter will view the positions of two higher education organizations. The first is the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators and then the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. At the conclusion of this chapter material contained in chapter 2 will be summarized.

State Level Actions in Wyoming and Colorado

One important aspect of an analysis of concealed firearms on Wyoming community college campuses is the intersection between the judiciary and state institutions of higher education. This is well exhibited by the effect of a Colorado Supreme Court ruling on an educational institutions' firearms policy (*Regents of the University of Colorado v. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus*, 2012).

The University of Colorado had what amounted to a firearms ban policy on its campus. This policy was challenged by the Students for Concealed Carry on Campus organization. On March 5, 2012, the State Supreme Court struck down the campus firearms policy. The court held that the Colorado Concealed Carry Act (CCA) (§§ 18 – 12 – 201 to 216 Colorado Revised Statutes) divested the Board of Regents of its authority to regulate concealed handgun possession on campus (*Regents of the University of Colorado v. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus*, 2012). This expansion of firearm rights may have an effect on the ability of higher education institutions to craft effective firearms policies (Meloy, 2011).

State and Federal Constitutional Issues

Firearms are specifically referred to in the United States Constitution (Berman & Murphy, 2007). There is much concern and debate about the intent and meaning of the phrases “bear arms,” “infringed,” and “well regulated militia,” and the fact that firearm possession was considered an important right by the founding fathers of the nation (U. S. Const. Amend II). Yet the possession of firearms has been highly regulated in this nation.

This country's history includes westward expansion of self-reliant and independent individuals into a wilderness. This expansion required guns for both protection and sustenance (*District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008). Sustenance is no longer provided at the hands of the

firearms owner. Protection and self - defense are, however, very much at the forefront of this issue. The United States Supreme Court has clearly enunciated that personal protection is at the heart of the second amendment right to firearm possession (District of Columbia v. Heller, 2008). The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution 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.”

Because the state Constitution of Wyoming was created many years following that of the federal government, the notion of firearms possession is not contained in an amendment but rather within the body of this document. The Wyoming Constitution in Article I, Section 24 provides: Right to bear arms. “The right of citizens to bear arms in defense of themselves and of the state shall not be denied.” This language leaves no doubt of the self - defense aspect of firearms in Wyoming (Hubbell, Engstrom, Horam, King, & Schuhmann, 2004).

The language in the Wyoming Constitution provides this right of self - defense to its state citizens. Further, the Wyoming Constitution recognizes the importance of this right for the purposes of self - defense. The federal and states’ rights to bear arms are consistent, in Wyoming, thereby providing a consistency in a citizen’s right to protection by use of firearms on both a national and state level (Coleman, Goldstein, & Howell, 2012).

The nature of the American system of jurisprudence affords individual states the ability to establish their own laws regulating the possession and carry of firearms. The result of this Federalist model is that each state develops, or not, and enforces its own gun-related laws (Maltese, Pika, & Shively, 2013). This Federalist model paves the way for each state to make decisions independent of the federal government.

Wyoming Legislature and Statutory Language

Similar to other states, Wyoming changed its laws concerning handgun ownership and the right to carry concealed weapons within the last decade (Wyoming Legislature, 2011). In 2011 Wyoming legislators made a radical departure from then existing concealed carry firearms laws. Prior to the 2011 General Session of the Wyoming Legislature, any citizen wishing to carry a concealed weapon must first make application to the county sheriff. The sheriff would analyze such application and grant, or not, a permit to carry a concealed firearm. This evaluative process had been in place for many years in Wyoming.

The Wyoming Legislature exhibited a strong preference to allow the concealed carry of weapons in Wyoming. This is an important deviation from prior law. This long standing law required a county Sheriff to issue a permit before firearms could be concealed about the person of the possessor. During the 2011 General Session, the Wyoming Legislature proposed a bill labeled Senate File 0047 entitled “Concealed Weapons” (Wyoming Senate, 2011).

Following debates and arguments on both floors, this bill was forwarded to Wyoming Governor Matt Mead. On March 2, 2011, Governor Mead, a former United States Attorney and law enforcement official, signed this bill into Wyoming law. This law became effective July 1 of 2011 in Wyoming. Since July of 2011, the law of Wyoming concerning the carrying of concealed firearms provides that a person otherwise eligible to possess a concealed carry permit need not take further action to obtain such a license (Wyoming Legislature, 2011). Essentially no permit for the concealed carry of firearms in Wyoming is required if a citizen is otherwise qualified.

Each citizen makes this qualification decision independently. There is no longer an evaluative process involving scrutiny by a county sheriff. This legislative change represented a

significant alteration in the laws concerning the concealed carry of firearms in Wyoming (Wyoming Legislature, 2011). This relatively new law clearly shows an expansion of gun rights to the Wyoming citizen.

In formulating this new law, the legislature relied heavily on the Wyoming Constitution. Even while demonstrating this right to firearms possession, the Wyoming Legislature left untouched the question concerning firearms on college or university campuses. The current and unchanged Wyoming law concerning firearms on campus, Title 6, Chapter 8, Section 104 provides that any college or university facility can prohibit the carrying of a firearm. Any person wishing to carry firearms on a Wyoming community college campus must obtain explicit written permission from that person responsible for security on the particular college or university campus (Wyoming Legislature, 2011).

The Wyoming Legislature chose to leave unchanged the law concerning the possession of firearms on college and university campuses. By legislative mandate, such firearms issues remain in the discretion of security officials of the individual college (Wyoming Legislature, 2011). Therefore, each individual campus safety and security director has the legislative authority to personally choose to allow, or not, firearms on campus. Campus security directors are responsible for the maintenance of a violence free college environment. In Wyoming the issue of firearms on campuses is determined by campus security directors (Wyoming Legislature, 2011).

Supreme Court of the United States

Did the United States Supreme Court provide guidance concerning the issue of firearms on college campuses? This question becomes critical because colleges must provide an environment free from harm for their students (Meloy, 2011). Recently the United States

Supreme court issued significant rulings concerning the right to possess firearms. The United States Supreme Court held an individual's right to possess a firearm exists regardless of militia service (*District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008). The 2008 case was further explained two years later where it was held that the right to possess firearms is and was expressly applicable to the states (*McDonald v. City of Chicago*, 2010). For the first time, the United States Supreme Court has made these express rulings concerning the personal possession of firearms by an individual irrespective of militia service. It can be argued that the Second Amendment essentially provides means of instituting a method of personal defense (Desmond, 2008).

It must be noted that while both these recent rulings of the United State Supreme Court explained certain Second Amendment rights, the Justices did not revoke the ability of schools to ban firearms (Kelderman & Lipka, 2008). Therefore, the question of firearms on college campuses remains unanswered. In fact, the United States Supreme Court specifically held that restrictions on the possession of firearms could still be appropriate in and at schools (*District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008).

Lack of Guidance Concerning Safety of Campuses

Both state and national governments have eased or removed many impediments for the private citizen to carry firearms. Neither the United States Supreme Court nor Wyoming legislature has provided guidance regarding the possession of firearms on community college campuses in Wyoming (Wyoming Senate, 2011). The issue of firearms on campus was either not addressed by the United States Supreme Court decisions (Meloy, 2011), or specifically left to the discretion of each individual campus (Wyoming Legislature, 2011).

State laws vary considerably with respect to allowing firearms on campus. "Wyoming, for example, prohibits firearms on college campuses unless the person has the permission of

campus security officials” (Harnisch, 2008, p. 2). Wyoming’s neighboring state, Colorado, allows firearms to be freely carried anywhere in the state (Regents of the University of Colorado v. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus, 2012).

While both federal and state governments have made important declarations concerning the possession of firearms by the citizenry, none significantly affected nor addressed the issue of firearms on college campuses. The United States Supreme Court specifically chose not to rule on the issue of firearms on school campuses. Likewise, the Wyoming legislature made no decision concerning weapons on a college or university campus, leaving current law unaffected. This indicates that two branches of government in this country, the national judiciary and Wyoming legislature, have not provided direction concerning concealed firearms on campus.

Because the Supreme Court of the United States declined to rule concerning this issue of firearms on college campuses, it remains an open question. The Wyoming legislature left unchanged laws regarding the carrying of firearms on higher education campuses. A difference of opinion exists as to how concealed firearms influence campus safety. This is true even in light of all persons wanting to create safer learning environments (Kahan, 2011).

A review of legal and scholarly writings provides little guidance on the issue of campus concealed firearm possession. While both the nation and Wyoming have exhibited desire to increase an individuals’ right to carry a firearm, neither have disturbed the current ability of a Wyoming public community college districts to ban, or not, firearms from its campuses. There need be neither consistency nor unity between the seven Wyoming community college districts. This literature review provides unique insight into an important safety issue. Wyoming campus security directors have been given the right to determine who may or not carry a weapon (Wyoming Legislature, 2011).

Little guidance has been provided by the Wyoming Legislature, and to date the courts, concerning the issue of firearms on Wyoming's public community colleges. While the citizens of Wyoming enjoy greatly increased gun possession rights since July 2011, campus security directors have no additional direction concerning concealed firearms at their colleges. There is no statutory or judicial language providing guidance or direction to Wyoming community college campus security directors

Firearms' Influence on the Safety of College Campuses

Both sides of the debate concerning concealed firearms on campus want the same outcome of safe and secure learning environments at higher education campuses (Kahan, 2011). However, proponents and opponents disagree on how to achieve this goal. Opinions and attitudes concerning the presence of concealed firearms on campus divide into two diverse and nearly mutually exclusive camps. One side of this cognitive chasm believes that only trained first responders should possess firearms and any other such possession is inappropriate (Harnisch, 2008). It has been suggested that the allowance of concealed firearms on campus may harm the learning environment on a college campus (Wyer, 2003).

The other side of this cognitive chasm believes that properly trained individuals carrying concealed firearms make a college more secure (Harnisch, 2008). Gun rights advocates contend that the possession of firearms by law-abiding persons is a potential remedy to campus violence (Harnisch, 2008). These proponents argue that a criminal may be deterred if they know a potential victim might be carrying a firearm (Harnisch, 2008). Louisiana State Representative Earnest Wooten pointed out "we've got a problem and maybe it'll be a deterrent if one of those disturbed persons or whackos thinks, 'if I go in shooting, they may shoot back'" (Harnisch, 2008, p. 5).

Presence of Firearms on Campus Enhancing College Safety

It was arguably the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting that brought the issue of campus safety to the forefront of popular culture. Until this recent tragedy, colleges were considered comparatively safe environments (Smith T. N., 2012). Following the tragic shooting at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois, and Oikos University, proponents of possession of firearms have suggested that such widespread concealed carry of firearms actually makes colleges more secure (Fox, 2008).

A dividing point between the two positions concerning the possession of firearms is the research by John Lott and David B. Mustard concerning guns and crime issues. This research utilized annual, cross sectional, time series, county level crime data within the United States from 1977 to 1992 for investigating the impact of “shall issue” right to carry firearm laws (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 5). This research indicated that the passage of firearms possession laws resulted in the reduction of some violent crime (Lott & Mustard, 1997).

Lott and Mustard posited that the prospective decrease in murders could be up to three times higher than overall accidental deaths in those states requiring the issuance of concealed firearms permits (Lott & Mustard, 1997). Their research concluded that “allowing citizens without criminal records or histories of significant mental illness to carry concealed handguns deters violent crime and appears to produce an extremely small and statistically insignificant change in accidental discharges” (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 31). Ultimately, this research indicated a net saving of human lives through the carrying of concealed weapons (Lott & Mustard, 1997). Persons who support the concealed carry of firearms hypothesize that unarmed persons on campus could not protect themselves or others from a criminal possessing such a weapon (Fennell, 2009).

Potentially a dozen states have or are considering changing their laws to permit “properly licensed students, faculty members, and administrators to carry concealed firearms on campus” (Fox, 2008, p. 48). Supporters argue that the death toll at Virginia Tech “might have been lower had students, other than the gunman, been armed” (Fox, 2008, p. 48). There is no way to determine whether more lives would have been lost in “uncontrolled crossfire,” or whether added episodes of gun violence would result (Fox, 2008, p. 48).

International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators Report

On April 18 2008, the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA) created a special task force that prepared a document entitled: *Overview of the Virginia Tech Tragedy and Implications for Campus Safety. The IACLEA Blueprint for Safety Campuses* (IACLEA, 2008). The report contained a number of recommendations. Recommendations related to firearms and campus safety were made under the heading of empowering and resourcing the campus public safety function. Under this title, the IACLEA noted that “if the institution employs a full service, sworn law enforcement agency, then the officers should have access to a full range of use of force options including lethal (firearms)” (IACLEA, 2008, p. 8).

This report indicated that any security officers need be armed. Further campus law enforcement or security personnel “provided with weapons should meet the standards established for use of those weapons as determined by the state in which the community is located” (IACLEA, 2008, p. 8). Colleges need to create “clear policy statements that should be implemented, establishing such weapons as defensive weapons” (IACLEA, 2008, p. 8).

Absence of Firearms on College Campuses Enhancing College Safety

While the death toll on college and university campuses continues to rise, the relationship between firearms and crime is being challenged. Almost four years prior to the Virginia Tech massacre, Ian Ayres of Yale Law School and John J. Donohue of Stanford Law School disputed data and arguments made by Lott and Mustard concerning the concept that more guns equate to less crime. Ayres and Donohue argued that the statistical evidence relied upon by Lott and Mustard is “limited, sporadic, and extraordinarily fragile” (Ayres & Donohue, 2003, p. 1201).

Ayres and Donohue (2003) expressed concern about model reliability (Ayres & Donohue, 2003, p. 1202). They were concerned that the Lott and Mustard research study had “infirmities” (Ayres & Donohue, 2003, p. 1202). Ayres and Donohue (2003) stated that “if anything, there is stronger evidence that laws promoting guns increase crime; than there is for the conclusion they decrease it” (Ayres & Donohue, 2003, p. 1202). Ayres and Donohue (2003) indicate that this research does not stand the “test of time” by stating:

When we added five years of county data and seven years of state data, allowing us to test and additional fourteen jurisdictions that adopted shall - issue laws, the previous Lott and Mustard findings proved not to be robust. Importantly, we showed that the Lott and Mustard results collapse when the more complete county data is subject to less – constrained jurisdiction – specific specifications or when the more – complete state data is tweaked in plausible ways. No longer can any plausible case be made on statistical grounds that shall – issue laws are like to reduce crime for all or even most states (Ayres & Donohue, 2003, p. 1296).

It is unknown whether the Ayres and Donohue (2003) research might have resulted in different findings if it were conducted following the Virginia Tech and other recent tragedies on higher education campuses. This position is supported by the IACLEA. Ultimately the “IACLEA does not support the carry of concealed weapons on a college campus, with the exception of sworn police officers in the conduct their professional duties” (IACLEA, 2008, p. 7).

American Association of State Colleges and Universities Position

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) has considered the issue of firearms on campus. They have taken a strong position supporting bans of concealed firearms on campuses (Harnisch, 2008). It is widely recognized that students face difficult challenges present in college attendance (Harnisch, 2008). It is just such challenges “inherent in college life (including drug use, alcohol abuse, stress, and social obstacles) when combined with firearms have potentially lethal consequences for all people in the campus community” (Harnisch, 2008, p. 5). When firearms are added to the normally accepted conflicts that arise in college, a dangerous or even deadly situation can be created (McLelland, 2009). Opponents of easing campus gun laws contend that allowing access to firearms in student residence halls and campus apartments would provide an effective way to escalate violence in confrontational situations thus increasing personal catastrophe (Harnisch, 2008).

Some research has indicated that students who carry firearms engage in a number of high risk activities (Bouffard, Nobles, & Wells, 2011). What is somewhat counterintuitive is the concept that a greater number of armed students experienced potential criminal problems than those who went unarmed (Presley, Meilman, & Cashin, 1997). College students and firearms can be very dangerous combination (Siebel, 2007 - 2008).

Harnisch (2008) suggested that the availability of firearms on campus could increase campus suicide rates (Harnisch, 2008). Most universities and colleges ban firearms from their campus and “most campus police chiefs recognize that allowing students to carry concealed firearms on campus would not prevent firearm violence on these campuses” (Thompson, et al. 2009, p. 252). Harnisch found that:

Even with the best of intentions, armed students or employees could escalate an already explosive situation further with accidents causing harm by use of a firearm in a situation

where such use is not warranted. Likewise, police could mistake the attacker for an armed student or employee (or vice versa) during a situation in which failure to make quick discernible judgments can be extraordinarily costly for all parties involved. (Harnisch, 2008, p. 5)

While such mistakes by police are quite unlikely due to their training and experience, the possibility must be considered.

The presence of concealed firearms could lead to conflicts between roommates, classmates, and others on campus escalating to the point where one or more individuals could be injured or killed as a result of gun violence (Harnisch, 2008). Some authors have indicated that an increased risk of lethal aspects of firearm tragedy exists when guns are allowed on college campuses (Price, Mrdjenovich, & Thompson, 2009). Further colleges bring students with “preexisting and emerging mental health concerns into high stress environments away from support and coping structures” (Schafer, Heiple, & Burruss, 2010, p. 312). Proponents of this position believe strongly that firearms make higher education campuses less safe.

Firearms may have a significant effect on campus bloodshed and while some argue that firearms are only an instrumentality of violence, not the cause, this point of view is not universal (Nichols, 1995). Opponents of firearms on campus argue, “the proliferation of weapons, as well as their availability and use, influences both the frequency and seriousness of campus crime” (Nichols, 1995, p. 2). Further, there is research involving one state university in Georgia that “by and large” college faculty are generally opposed to allowing the concealed carry of firearms on campuses (Bennett, Kraft, & Grubb, 2012, p. 350). Villahermosa posited that firearms should not be possessed by students, professors, nor administrators (Villahermosa, 2008). Keeling (1999) argued that there is no rational reason why a student would require a firearm at college (Keeling, 1999). Many college officials responsible for the safety and security of campuses primarily oppose the free possession of concealed weapons on campus (Harnisch, 2008).

Summary

This chapter discussed relevant and important scholarly writings as they relate to concealed carry of firearms on higher education campuses. Chapter 2 considered judicial and legislative actions by both Wyoming and Colorado concerning the concealed carry of firearms on higher education campuses. This chapter further considered important decisions by the United States Supreme Court relevant to constitutional issues and concealed carry of firearms. Then chapter 2 discussed literature and scholarly writings that concerned both the absence and presence of concealed carried firearms as determinant of campus firearm safety. Finally, the positions of two major higher education organizations were considered. Positions put forth by both the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators and American Association of State Colleges and Universities were explored.

There is a division amid strongly opposed sections caused by opinion or belief between firearms proponents and opponents. Proponents of easing campus gun laws contend that firearms are an instrumentality of self - defense and will promote safe and secure college environments. Opponents of guns on campus believe such firearms are an instrumentality of violence and will lead to incalculable destruction.

Advocates argue that “current regulations restricting firearms on campus have not deterred recent attacks and some gun rights proponents believe that prospective attackers might reconsider their actions if they knew students or faculty were allowed to possess weapons” (Harnisch, 2008, p. 4). These advocates see firearms on campuses as an instrumentality of safety. Proponents firmly believe that the possession of concealed firearms by law abiding campus constituents makes a college safer and more secure.

Campus security directors are responsible for the maintenance of a violence free college

environment. The issue of firearms on campus is placed squarely upon the shoulders of these campus safety and security officials (Wyoming Legislature, 2011). A review of the literature provides a paucity of information concerning the presences or absence of firearms on Wyoming's public community colleges. There is no statutory or judicial language assisting Wyoming community college campus security directors in their quest for safer institutional campuses. It is evident that little research or scholarly writing has been conducted concerning campus security directors' perceptions regarding firearms on Wyoming public community college districts.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors concerning concealed carry firearms. This study further sought to examine how these campus security director attitudes, perceptions, and understandings might influence or inform practices concerning concealed firearms on institutional campuses. Perceptions are always intentional and therefore “constitutive” of experience (Willig, 2008, p. 53). Phenomenology focuses on careful descriptions of ordinary conscious experience of everyday life (Schwandt, 2007). As noted by Willig (2008) there is no right or wrong methods of research (Willig, 2008).

Research Design

Research is a way of knowing and understanding based on systematic inquiry (Mertens, 2010). Research is conducted for any number of reasons including to understand, describe, predict, control, or empower individuals (Mertens, 2010). A qualitative approach was chosen to explore the perceptions, attitudes and understanding of Wyoming’s campus security directors.

A phenomenological qualitative approach was used herein. Phenomenology focuses on the experiences of participants from their personal perspective (Roberts, 2010). A phenomenological approach is very appropriate for research when it is critical to understand several individuals’ “common or shared experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). Researchers collect data in the form of words, not numbers, which describe participants’ perceptions (Roberts, 2010). Phenomenological research begins with broad, general question about the area under investigation (Roberts, 2010). Researchers then seek to create a holistic picture of the

topic they are studying by use of open - ended interview questions (Roberts, 2010). As stated by Merriam (2009), “the task of the phenomenologist, then, is to depict the essence or basic structure of experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25).

This study solicited the attitudes, understandings and perceptions of Wyoming public community college security directors concerning the concealed carry of firearms on their campuses. The researcher determined that a specific type of phenomenology was best suited to obtain important information for this study: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of experiences (Smith, Paul, & Larkin, 2012). It is a fine tuned research method used to obtain details of individuals’ experiential perceptions (Smith et al., 2010). IPA was chosen as the specific type of phenomenology to be used in this study because it is effective in determining the consistency of specific phenomena (Smith et al., 2010).

Through the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis, themes emerged. Super ordinate themes identify those constructs and patterns that emerged during the analysis of data (Smith et al., 2010). These constructs have lesser, emergent subthemes that are descriptive of the super ordinate themes (Smith et al., 2010). These subthemes logically and organically describe the larger super ordinate theme (Willig, 2001). Through the analysis of super ordinate and subthemes, a clear and holistic vision of the data was developed.

By applying this strategy of inquiry to real-life contexts, added value evidence is obtained (Schwandt, 2007). The researcher obtained direct information concerning the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors. This direct information manifested itself in exact words of participants, without restrictions or formality. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was an efficacious approach to this research study.

Research Questions

As noted earlier, any research must be guided by focused and well crafted research questions (Jones, 2006). This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors concerning the presence of concealed carry firearms on safety at Wyoming community college campuses?
2. What are the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors concerning the absence of concealed carry firearms on safety at Wyoming community colleges?
3. How do these perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors inform their practice and approach to college safety as it relates to the concealed carry of firearms on Wyoming community colleges?

Role of the Researcher

Within the qualitative research literature, much has been written about the relationship between researcher and participant. The relationship between researcher and participant is an evolutionary process (Jones et al., 2006). The researcher and participants are involved in a process that influences each other (Mertens, 2010). This evolutionary process goes from an objective separateness orientation to one where inquiry is a form of interaction that influences both researcher and participant (Jones et al., 2006).

Concerning this research the power relationship between researcher and participant is both *de minimis* and potentially significant. This comes from the researcher's status as both insider and outsider. The power dynamic is *de minimis* in that the researcher comes to the participants as a long time member of the close knit, exclusive, and somewhat secretive, society of law enforcement officers. Coming to such a study without this type of background could

easily be an exercise in futility. The possession of this experience, however, allows the researcher to “talk the lingo,” understanding underlying concepts and meanings of participants. This is an important avenue of information for the research project.

The researcher came to the campus security directors in some respects as an outsider. By trying to obtain information from a number of separate “safety and security kingdoms,” the researcher has the ability to point out flaws and problems to any individual participant’s professional identity. This is an aspect of this research that must be kept in the forefront to minimize its effect on the overall study. The researcher was sensitive to the imbalanced power dynamic that could place participants at professional risk. The researcher is certain that this imbalance in the power dynamic did not negatively affect the participants or the information obtained in this study.

An evolution occurred during the course of the research where participants became comfortable with both the researcher and research (Schwartz, Donovan, & Guido-DiBrito, 2009). Participants appeared relaxed and forthcoming. Participants seemed eager to respond to all questions in an open and honest manner. This allowed the researcher to obtain important insights and data.

As a former Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the researcher has significant expertise in conducting quality informative interviews. These interviewing skills, experience, and training developed as part of researcher’s previous career were put in place to achieve informative and educational results from personal interviews of all participants. Researcher’s prior experience was combined with information and skills obtained by way of the Colorado State University PhD program to obtain information that was trustworthy, authentic, and credible.

Reflexivity is the “process of critical self-reflection on ones’ biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so forth” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 260). It considers a human as the instrument of research. Researchers need to explain the lens through which the research is viewed (Merriam, 2009). Much research cannot be understood without reference to ideas and contexts within the researcher’s life (Creswell, 2007). Reflexivity must be considered to affirm the integrity of a qualitative researcher (Merriam, 2009). Sometimes called researcher’s position, reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on self as a researcher. Investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken (Merriam, 2009).

As a Special Agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the researcher was required to carry a concealed firearm constantly. As such, the researcher formed a personal opinion concerning the concealed carry of firearms and safety. The American criminal justice system is reactive by design (Maltese, et al., 2013). Its main function is to retroactively investigate and punish people responsible for a crime (Maltese, et al., 2013). The system is not designed to prevent crime. Such reactive approach is beyond controversy. That is how the American criminal justice system is constructed to work. This system has few protective responsibilities. The criminal justice system has extremely limited proactive tasks. Therefore, American citizens must protect themselves and those dear to them. The government cannot do it.

The researcher has seen this type of violence during his career in the criminal justice system. During that time, the researcher routinely encountered both violence and its effects. Often the most devastating effects occurred when a firearm was the instrument of violence. The human cost was and is incalculable. If this research can be employed to help address firearm violence on college campuses, it will be useful indeed.

The researcher believes that persons should be allowed to carry concealed firearms if they are convinced it is necessary for safety. Many methods of protection do not require firearms. Such things as less lethal weapons or martial arts training can serve as personal defense. Just being aware of surroundings might be all that is required. Nonetheless, if a citizen believes a firearm is necessary for safety, he or she should be allowed to carry one. That includes possession on college campuses.

The researcher has a Juris Doctor degree and has worked directly with the law and its enforcement for many years. Because of this formal training and experience, it should be noted that research information inconsistent with the current state of the law are somewhat problematic in the researcher's perception. Because of this recognition of legal bias, special care was exercised to objectively report the results of this study. Nonetheless, this bias and theoretical disposition should be recognized as a potential limitation and reflexivity issue.

Participants

The research study included the primary campus security director from each of the seven community college districts in Wyoming, thereby using an entire state as the basis for the study. Information was obtained through personal interviews of campus security directors using open-ended questions. This approach allowed the full development of campus safety officials' experiential perceptions concerning the influence of concealed carry firearms at Wyoming community colleges.

Participants were campus security directors who are responsible for the welfare of their respective campuses. Campus security directors are directly responsible for the welfare and safety of their respective campuses. Nonetheless, they do not provide guarantees of safety. Such guarantees are likely impossible. There are seven community college districts in Wyoming.

Each district has one responsible campus security director. Thus, seven interviews were conducted of those campus security directors responsible for each district. The demographics of all participants are provided in the aggregate for confidentiality reasons and included in chapter 4 of this research.

Data Collection Measures

Campus security directors were personally interviewed using open - ended questions as part of a semi structured interview. Interviews took place in the offices of each campus security director. This enhanced the interview process by allowing each participant to be comfortable. The researcher interviewed each participant in person; no telephonic or distance interviews occurred. This allowed the researcher to observe nonverbal communications. This also allowed the researcher to see and obtain information from the office environment of participants.

Interview questions were approved by the researcher's dissertation committee (Appendix A). Merriam (2009) stated, "to get at the essence of basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). The raw data was categorized into broad themes, which were further organized into comprehensive patterns.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed prior to conducting a thematic analysis using two professional transcription services. These recordings will be stored in a secure location for a minimum of three years. Thematic analysis is an exploratory approach used to identify emerging themes from textual material such as interview transcripts (Schwandt, 2007). Thematic analysis was used in this research study because it is useful in analyzing or organizing qualitative data.

Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to review and organize the interview transcripts of the campus security directors.

Researcher read all interview transcripts an initial time for themes that emerged both inductively and deductively (Kezar, 2005). Transcripts were read holistically so that the researcher could get an overall picture of the data from each individual participant (Willig, 2008). This was also done to ensure that no significant errors occurred in the transcription of the personal interviews.

The researcher then carefully analyzed the information contained in the interview transcripts of campus security directors. Through a number of readings of each individual transcript, themes began to emerge (Willig, 2008). The researcher read through the interview transcripts, highlighting "significant statements," sentences, or quotes that provided an understanding of how the participants experienced certain phenomena relating to the concealed carry of firearms (Creswell, 2007, p. 61).

Emergent themes were developed into clusters (Willig, 2001). The overall themes contained patterns and clusters that were organized into super ordinate themes. A super ordinate theme is one in which identified themes and related patterns are placed together (Smith et al., 2012). Super ordinate themes were modified or explained by lesser subthemes. This approach allowed perceptions, attitudes and understandings of Wyoming community college campus security officials to be collected and analyzed in an effective and efficient manner. Table 1 is a visual depiction concerning the organization of super ordinate themes and the associated subthemes. Table 1 is located in chapter 4 of this study.

Through the use of thematic analysis, the researcher collected the "essence" of the phenomena (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). It is through this process that the essence of the research

was obtained. The perceptions, attitudes and understandings of Wyoming campus security directors were effectively gathered, organized, synthesized and analyzed (Smith et al., 2012). By use of this method, emerging information was discovered, explored, and organized into coherent and synergistic themes.

The presence of firearms as enhancing safety emerged as a super ordinate theme. Several subthemes were developed that illuminated this super ordinate theme. This super ordinate theme had 5 explanatory subthemes. These subthemes dealt with possessor training; possessor vetting; concealed carried firearms were already present on campus; use of concealed carry firearms as a means of self - defense; increased costs and expense to Wyoming colleges. These subthemes were collected and analyzed under the super ordinate theme to which they were related.

The second super ordinate theme stated that the absence of concealed carry firearms may enhance campus safety. These subthemes concerned disputes turning deadly; fear by students; fear by instructors; hindrance of decision makers; existence of safe campuses; no concealed firearm being used in campus crime; location and geography providing a safe environment; and first responders unable to identify perpetrators. All 8 subthemes were descriptive of the overarching, super ordinate theme.

The third super ordinate theme indicated that the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms does not influence the safety of Wyoming community colleges. This super ordinate was explained by 2 subthemes. The first subtheme dealt with the presumed presence of concealed firearms on campus. The second descriptive subtheme emerged because no firearms had been used in a violent crime at any Wyoming community college district.

The fourth and final super ordinate theme had no subthemes and seemed to indicate that concealed firearms were irrelevant to campus safety. Rather the information gathered pursuant

to this super ordinate theme indicated that the involvement and proactive stance of a campus security department kept a campus safe. Such a proactive stance was considered far more important than the presence of absence of concealed firearms.

Strategies of Trustworthiness, Authenticity, and Credibility

Quality is a central theme to this research, which included the concepts of trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility. How the tripartite concepts of trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility were achieved herein will be explained. To enhance the concept of research quality this chapter discusses rigor and the related concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Once it was determined that interviews would be used as a data collection method, the researcher sought appropriate resources to assure quality data was obtained by use of this method. Resources consulted by researcher included scholarly writings, literature, textbooks, discussions with instructors and other experts. Subsequent analysis of appropriate resources determined that quality information and analysis could be obtained through the use of interviews. Following the actual interviews of participants, it was determined that important and significant information was indeed obtained through the vehicle of personal in - depth interviews of participants.

As qualitative research is quite different then quantitative, a different approach to quality must be taken. The quantitative terms of validity and reliability have no meaning regarding qualitative research. Rather, qualitative researchers use terms such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell, 2007).

Credibility is the extent that dependable conclusions can be derived from the research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Several strategies can be utilized to ensure trustworthiness,

authenticity, and credibility. One such strategy to ensure quality research is a well - defined process by which obtained information is evaluated. This process must be designed to ensure, authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness of obtained data.

The researcher in this case primarily followed the steps outlined by Creswell (2009) to ensure that the data analysis process was consistent with trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility. All obtained transcripts were reviewed initially to affirm that no obvious mistakes were made during the transcription (Smith, et al., 2012). The researcher did coding of these transcripts manually. An important procedure to ensure credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness is “intercoder agreement (or cross checking),” which was utilized in this research study (Creswell, 2009).

A Colorado State University, School of Education, Higher Education Leadership cohort 2009 member, Associate Dean Eric Heiser, not involved in this research project, was consulted concerning the coding of relevant data to ensure a constancy of information. In addition, examples of each code were reviewed by reference to actual transcripts obtained during the data collection phase of this project. This resulted in cross checking or intercoder agreement of codes from the analysis of transcripts obtained from Wyoming campus security directors. It should be noted that this was done in such a manner as to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of participants. See Appendix B for document relating to intercoder agreement.

Member checking is also a method of ensuring trustworthiness and can be used for testing data quality (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). However, it is not effective to show the raw transcripts to participants to confirm accuracy. Rather, a finished product is the most effective way to confirm trustworthiness of data. To accomplish member checking, the researcher provides information concerning the polished product such as themes (Creswell. 2009).

In this case a complete list of all developed super ordinate and subthemes were provided to research participants. An opportunity was given for each and every participant to modify or question each theme. No such modifications were communicated by participants to researcher. This indicates that member checking was successful in assuring trustworthiness of research collected herein.

Another trustworthiness process is the use of “rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings” (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). By using open - ended questions, participants were able to fully express their attitudes, understandings and perceptions. This allowed attitudes, perceptions, and understandings to be provided in a rich and realistic manner. These indicia of trustworthiness, credibility, and authenticity confirm the quality of data relating to the experiential perceptions of campus security directors.

The final utilized approach to ensuring trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of this research project was peer review or debriefing. This procedure involves locating a person who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). This was accomplished through a member from the Colorado State University, School of Education, and Higher Education Leadership 2009 cohort, Vice President Danny Gillum. This peer review indicated that the research study was trustworthy, authentic, and credible. The peer reviewer was a different individual than the one used for the intercoder agreement strategy of assuring credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness. This peer review was also conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality of study participants.

The research utilized peer debriefing, intercoder agreement, member checking, and thick, rich descriptions throughout this study as strategies of trustworthiness, authenticity, and

credibility. This research study is credible, trustworthy, and authentic. Member checking confirmed the information obtained concerning attitudes, perceptions, and understandings of participants. By use of these above articulated processes, information obtained from Wyoming campus security directors can be relied upon as trustworthy, authentic, and credible,

Rigor

Ensuring rigor in this study was important and addressed in several ways. There are any numbers of processes and procedures that can be used by qualitative researchers to enhance rigor (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The researcher did use one of the recognized approaches for qualitative inquiry. The approach used herein was interpretative phenomenology. The researcher followed those procedures used in such methodology. By the use of the recognized approach of interpretative phenomenology, the researcher satisfied one of the primary criteria for rigor.

Transferability is the rich, thick description of participants and their cultural context (Schwartz et al., 2009). Transferability concerns findings that are transferable between the researcher and participants. This transferability is another measure of rigor in qualitative studies. Dependability and transferability are interrelated to the extent researchers use appropriate research processes and practices (Shenton, 2005). This research resulted in rich, thick descriptions by participants in an appropriate cultural context.

“Confirmability” is way to determine the value of a qualitative research study (Lincoln, 2001). This is accomplished by fully examining the length of engagement, the care with which the research procedures are followed, detailed record keeping, and extent to which researchers explore and report a variety of interpretations (Lincoln, 2001). The researcher in this study explored and reported a vast array of perceptions, attitudes and understandings that were

provided by Wyoming community college campus security directors. The research procedures followed were extensive, detailed, and confirming of rigor.

Confirming rigor is a primary reason that personal interviews were conducted in the offices of participants. It allowed the researcher to not only view nonverbal communication, but the participants' surroundings as well. For example in one such circumstance, the researcher asked a participant about emergency management manuals on the shelves of his office. That is merely one example of care used by researcher in this project. Further, rigorous data collection procedures were used in this project. This satisfies the concept of confirmability listed by Lincoln (2001) as a criterion of research quality.

That information received from campus security directors was compared to material acquired during the literature review. This comparison of obtained data to an outside literature review provided an additional layer of rigor. This rigor was accomplished by ratifying and confirming the attitudes, perceptions and understandings of campus security directors through the use of outside literature and scholarly writings (Linder, 2011). As another element of rigor, the researcher has written a persuasive analysis so that the reader may feel they were present during the interviews. By this persuasive writing, another concept of research rigor was enhanced and trustworthiness assured (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Ethical Issues

During the course of this qualitative study, ethical issues were considered and addressed. It was necessary to consciously consider such ethical issues as seeking consent, avoiding the conundrum of deception, maintaining confidentiality, and where appropriate, protecting the anonymity of individual participants (Creswell, 2007). This research used written consent forms

(Appendix C) that directly addressed the ethical principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and consent (Jones et al., 2006).

The ethical issues were properly addressed by use of appropriate consent forms. Upon reflection, however, it appears that these ethical issues were somewhat minimized. There was very little chance of harm coming to the participants because of this research. Regardless of this small potential of harm, all those requirements set out by the Institutional Review Board were followed.

Further, the gain available to participants was significant. Reciprocity or “giving back” to participants for their time and efforts in this research was important (Creswell, 2007). It is the researcher’s opinion that the campus security directors will receive very useful information. Wyoming campus security directors will be provided information of actions taken by their peers in keeping campuses safe.

At the conclusion of this study, campus security directors will be provided insight into attitudes possessed by their counterparts at other campuses. They will be given a well documented and thorough account regarding the critical topic of concealed carry of firearms on college campuses. Campus security directors will be party to important information useful in maintaining firearm safety on their particular campuses. This reciprocity will be of significance to them in their professional duties. Ultimately, this research will make campus security directors more effective in their primary functions. Campus security directors, by their nature and choice of profession, are extremely concerned about overall safety concerning their charges on and around college campuses.

Summary

This research examined and explored the perceptions, attitudes and understandings of participants about concealed carry firearms on campus. There is a significant gap in the scholarly writing concerning the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms at Wyoming public community colleges districts. This research adds to the depth and breadth of scholarly writings.

Participant campus security directors are those persons most responsible for safe and secure environments at Wyoming community college districts. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was the strategy of inquiry used. This data was then subjected to a thematic analysis, which provided rich and thick qualitative data.

The data was collected through personal interviews of campus security directors. Credibility, trustworthiness, and authenticity were confirmed in this research study by use of inter coder agreement, member checking and peer review. Rigor was assured by thick rich descriptions and use of recognized approaches for qualitative inquiry. Ethical issues were carefully considered and addressed through the use of appropriate consent forms.

Through a qualitative analysis, this research examined the understandings, attitudes and perceptions of Wyoming community college district campus security directors. This qualitative study provided rich and thick descriptions of participants' perceptions, attitudes, and understandings concerning concealed carry firearms on institutional campuses. These thick, rich descriptions allowed for the development of emergent themes as they related to participants' understandings, attitudes, and perceptions.

Through those processes, procedures, and methods set out in this methodology chapter, the researcher obtained important insights into the perceptions, attitudes and understandings of

campus security directors. Participant perceptions, attitudes, and understandings concerning the influence of concealed carry firearms on institutional firearm safety environments was thoroughly examined and explored. It is through this research that important information was obtained from Wyoming community college security directors.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors concerning concealed carry firearms. This study further seeks to examine how these campus security director perceptions might influence or inform practices concerning concealed carry firearms on institutional campuses.

Chapter 4 provides the results of the research in narrative form. This approach was taken to make participants responses real and actual (Smith, 2008). Each super ordinate theme is considered with appropriate, explanatory subthemes. Each of these super ordinate and subthemes are supported by selected direct quotes of participants. Every direct quote is representative of research data relevant to the super ordinate or subtheme.

Campus security directors from all community college districts in the state of Wyoming participated in individual, personal interviews. Each campus security director was interviewed in their offices on their respective campuses. Where appropriate, the researcher pursued data based on nonverbal communication adding a richness and texture to the interviews. The personal, in depth, individual interviews were invaluable to this project. Each of the interviews was conducted using semi structured interviews where the same open ended questions were asked in the same order.

Participant Demographics

In an effort to keep all participants anonymous, and information confidential to the extent appropriate, numeric designations were randomly assigned to participants. The alphabetic designations of CSD (Campus Security Director) were provided for each participant. A numeric character (1 through 7) was randomly assigned to represent a continuity of institutions.

Therefore, for example, CSD 5 was the participant responsible for security at institution 5, regardless of title or college name. In an effort to maintain anonymity, participant demographic information is provided in the aggregate. As can be seen by these aggregate demographics participants were diverse. They represented a variety of campus security models.

- Length of job at current institution: Four months to 14 years.
- Gender: All participants were male.
- Law Enforcement Background: Every participant, but one, had some type of law enforcement background. There was a private contractor, deputy sheriff, former supervisor of college police department, and current chief of a law enforcement department. In addition, two participants had been sworn uniformed officers of local police departments where their institution was located.
- Campus Security Model: Five participants participated in a campus security department that was unarmed with any type of firearm. One participant carried an exposed firearm, but was the only such in his department. One participant was a chief of police and sworn Wyoming law enforcement officer. He and his department had all the capabilities and authority of any sworn Wyoming law enforcement officer. He and his entire department were armed with open carry firearms.
- Educational background: Participants educational background varied greatly. Participant educational background ranged from a little college, through two master's degrees and one campus security director who had earned a PhD.

Emergent Themes

After all interviews were completed in a manner consistent with Colorado State University's Institutional Review Board, the researcher proceeded with a systematic approach to reviewing all transcripts. The interviews resulted in nearly 150 transcribed pages from seven different participants. The transcripts were read for accuracy to determine whether errors had occurred in transcription. The transcripts were read carefully, with attention to both detail and overarching concepts in such a manner as to identify important emerging themes (Willig, 2008). The researcher read the interview transcripts, highlighting "significant statements," sentences, or quotes that illuminated the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of participants (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). It should be noted that the oral recordings were also listened to in part a number of times by the researcher. This approach allowed the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of Wyoming community college campus security officials to be collected and analyzed in an effective and efficient manner.

Pursuant to the design of this research project, four super ordinate themes emerged. Within three of these super ordinate themes, a number of relevant subthemes emerged. The emergent super ordinate themes in this study were explained and described by specific related subthemes. The fourth theme stood alone with no explanatory subthemes.

The 4 themes that emerged were then analyzed to confirm support from the research data. These 4 emergent super ordinate themes were:

1. Presence of concealed carry firearms may enhance campus safety;
2. Absence of concealed carry firearms may enhance campus safety;
3. Concealed carry firearms make no difference concerning campus safety; and

4. Proactive security departments with strong institutional relations critically important to campus safety.

Subthemes were developed for super ordinate themes one, two, and three. Each subtheme was important in explaining the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors. Under the fourth and final super ordinate theme, there were no subthemes. This fourth super ordinate theme mandated a proactive and trustworthy campus security department. Table 1 directly below lists each of the 4 super ordinate themes. Then below each of these super ordinate themes, there are the descriptive subthemes. These subthemes emerged organically and are used to fully explain each super ordinate theme. Following Table 1, each super ordinate and subtheme is listed and analyzed.

Table 1

Super ordinate themes and associated subthemes

Super Ordinate Themes				
	Presence of concealed carry firearms may enhance campus safety	Absence of concealed carry firearms may enhance campus safety	Concealed Carry Firearms make no difference concerning campus safety	Proactive Security Departments with Strong Institutional Relations Critically Important to Campus Safety
Subthemes	The Presence of Concealed Carry Firearms May Increase Safety on Wyoming Community Colleges when there is Appropriate Training	Disputes Could Turn Deadly if Firearms Allowed on Campus Learning Environment Hindered Because Students Afraid to Express Opinions	Concealed Firearms are Currently Present on College Campuses	No subthemes emerged from Data
	Even Though the	Instructors Afraid to	Firearms not used	

Presence of Concealed Firearms can make a Community College Safer it can only be so if Possessors are Properly Vetted

do their Jobs Because of concern for Firearms in the Possession of Students

during any Campus Crimes

Firearms Might be Functional in Self - defense and Avert Crime

Free Carry of Concealed Firearms Hinder the Ability of Administrators to Make Decisions Regarding the Security of Their Institutions

Concealed Carry Firearms are Already Present on Campus in Violation of Campus Policy and Wyoming Law

Increased Costs and Expenses to Wyoming Community Colleges

Safe Environment Currently Exists with Absence of Concealed Carry Firearms

Crimes on Campus Would not have Been Averted by Victim Possessing Firearm

Location and Geography of Institution Provides a Safe Environment

First Responders Unable To Identify Perpetrators

Super Ordinate Theme One: Presence of Concealed

Carry Firearms May Enhance Campus Safety

The initial super ordinate theme dealt with the presence on campus of concealed carry firearms as enhancing campus safety. This super ordinate theme is supported by 5 subthemes. Each super ordinate and subtheme is described below and supported by representative direct quotes from participants.

The Presence of Concealed Carry Firearms may Increase Safety on Wyoming Community Colleges When There is Appropriate Training

Many participants indicated that if concealed firearm possessors obtained proper training, it could have a positive effect on campus safety. For example, CSD 2 stated “I feel that concealed firearms in the appropriate area and in the appropriate person’s possession can increase safety, potentially.” CSD 2 further indicated he would need to be personally responsible for judging qualifications of concealed carry firearms, but such a case “could definitely increase safety and potentially save lives in an active shooter situation” (CSD 2). This training necessity was further echoed by CSD 3, who specified that if an institution wanted to use firearms to deter campus violence they would need to be “in the hands of trained individuals.” CSD 3 stated that possession of a firearm by a trained individual would be a “true deterrent”.

Participant CSD 4 also suggested that the presence of firearms by trained individuals would enhance campus security, noting “I would have no problem with it (presence of concealed firearms) if applicants were vetted and trained in the carrying of weapons.” CSD 6 provided a confirmatory statement indicating: “I teach a firearms class here at the college and the level of— skill level of people you get is so varied it really scares me. I’ve had a couple faculty and staff actually take my course now and a few of them I would trust in a situation with guns.” CSD 6

came to this opinion based on his teaching experiences. CSD 1 explained that he is “afraid for those individuals that aren’t properly trained in the use of a firearm, firearms retention, and just overall safety. What mistakes could be made, with never, ever having an intention of harming someone” (CSD 1).

Even Though the Presence of Concealed Firearms can Make a Community College Safer, it can Only be so if Possessors are Properly Vetted

Participants noted that certain persons should not be allowed to possess or operate concealed carry firearms. This was a common theme by all campus security directors.

Participant CSD 2 stated that many people lack the “maturity level” to possess a firearm. He further indicated that such a person could “snap one day” and use a firearm to settle an argument. CSD 2 believes that some people are just “not capable” of using or operating a firearm in any type of circumstance. CSD 2 stated this is true whether in a normal or emergency situation.

CSD 2 further explained by indicating that there are people who are “hostile” and have temper and anger problems. They get into an argument over something “ridiculous” and the argument “escalates.” CSD 2 came to this opinion because of his experience with persons outside the higher education community. CSD 2 stated that there are a “percentage” of people who should not be allowed to carry a firearm. There are people who are “mentally diminished in some capacity and aren’t capable of safely operating a firearm” (CSD 2).

CSD 4 described the problem of proper vetting and training persons carrying concealed firearms. This participant stated that time passage was an important consideration. A possessor of a firearm could obtain a concealed carry permit and have absolutely no problems in their “personal life, psychological state,” or in any matter. CSD 4 stated “and then something can happen, be it domestic related or whatever six months later and you run an issue, thereof, of

having someone who has some mental issues and so forth.” CSD 6 indicated that there were many persons who would require “a lot of years” for training before he felt they would be proficient in how to use a firearm in a “stressful situation.”

Concealed Carry Firearms are Already Present on Campus in Violation of Campus Policy and Wyoming Law

This theme emerged from data concerning the possession of concealed carry of weapons in violation of college policy and Wyoming state law. Many participants indicated that there are very likely concealed carry firearms on campus in violation of campus policy and Wyoming state law. For example, CSD 4 stated: “I’m not naïve enough to believe that there are not already individuals bringing concealed weapons on campus.” Moreover, to emphasize this unknown possession, CSD 4 said: “there are going to be people who bring concealed weapons on the campus with or without our knowledge.” CSD 4 also said that there were always going to be “elements” that violate the law and carry “inappropriately.” Participant CSD 6 said that “kids probably have these guns anyways ...” Other participants, agreed firearms are already on campus. If the policy on institutions were to change and allow concealed firearms, participants felt that firearms would be reported. This would provide notice and location of concealed firearms. This is information campus safety offices do not currently possess.

Participant CSD 5 noted: “I’m not naïve. I’m sure there probably are some (firearms) but they’ve not come to our attention.” Participant CSD 7 agreed that there are probably firearms on campus by stating: “I suspect we have people carrying firearms on campus we don’t know about because we don’t have many detectors ...”

Firearms Might be Functional in Self - Defense and Avert Crime

All participants at Wyoming community colleges believe that firearms were not used to commit crimes on campuses. There was significant uniformity concerning this issue. For example, when CSD 1 was asked about this issue, he stated: “I am reasonably certain that (firearms) were not a factor.” CSD 3 responded in the negative when asked if firearms related crimes had occurred on this campus. CSD 7 indicated, “no weapon was involved” when asked about specific crimes. He was unaware of a firearm being involved in any violent campus crime.

In the experiences of all participants, none were aware of a firearm ever being used to commit a campus crime. However, some CSDs noted victims of crimes on campus could have potentially used firearms to protect themselves. Any such responses by participants were couched in the hypothetical as no firearms had been used in any violent campus crimes. Nonetheless, participant CSD 5 noted that the use of deadly force would depend on the victim. CSD 5 stated: “I suppose that depends on the victim, I mean, if she is willing to use deadly force against the guy then I mean, sure.” He then compared a firearm to a first aid kit. CSD 5 noted that you do not think about a first aid kit until you “desperately” need it. If the first aid kit is not there, you wish you had it (CSD 5).

Participant CSD 5 acknowledged that a firearm might hypothetically act as an instrument of victim protection. However, CSD 5 indicated that he would “doubt it seriously” if a firearm would make a difference to a victim. Participant CSD 6 indicated that crime at his institution would not be affected by the concealed carry of firearms. CSD 6 believed this to be true from either the perpetrator’s or victim’s perspective.

Increased Costs and Expenses to Wyoming Colleges

Certain participants specified that the expense of allowing the concealed carry of firearms would increase the costs to an institution. If the concealed carry of firearms were allowed on campus by college community members, campus security officers would likewise have to carry firearms. Such a change to a campus security department is somewhat self-evident.

Participant CSD 1 indicated that the cost to insure an armed campus safety department would increase expenses to the institution. CSD 1 also noted that ammunition, bulletproof vests, and other costs could rise “exponentially.” Participant CSD 1 noted that training time and cost for members of the campus safety department would be extensive. “It’s gonna be time and cost” (CSD 1).

Participant CSD 4 noted that there is not a financial commitment to safety and security at Wyoming state institutions. Such funding would be “reactive” and when something terrible occurs, “then there will be money” (CSD 4). CSD 4 also noted the cost of increased salaries to pay properly trained CSD members. Such CSD employees could no longer be part-time hourly wage employees.

As stated by CSD 7, security of an institution is very much a budget issue. Participant CSD 7 hopes that safety can be enhanced through technology. CSD 7 provided the example of software that detects a specific type of movement and then flashes or “alerts the dispatcher.” CSD 7 hopes that this and other technology can be utilized to enhance safety on campuses. Technology would increase costs to the institution and become a budget issue. CSD 7 said that an entire industry has grown around campus security technology.

Super Ordinate Theme Two: Absence of Concealed

Carry Firearms May Enhance Campus Safety

The second super ordinate theme dealt with concealed firearms being absent on campus as enhancing campus safety. This super ordinate theme is supported by 8 subthemes. Each super ordinate and subtheme is described below and supported by representative direct quotations. Campus security directors at Wyoming community colleges were uniform in their satisfaction concerning policies prohibiting firearms on campus. Participants felt that a concealed firearms prohibition on their campus was an effective way to enhance safety and security. This is best exemplified by CSD 2's statement: "I think it's definitely safer to have things the way they are with nobody allowed to carry." This sentiment was echoed by CSD 1 who indicated that no one outside of law enforcement "should be allowed to carry" on campus. CSD 3 further supported this super ordinate theme by indicating that an "academic setting" is not "conducive" to the presence of firearms.

Described below are 8 subthemes used to explain why the absence of concealed carry firearms on their campus was a good way to maintain safety and security. All developed subthemes are supported by the actual words of participants. These subthemes illuminated why campus security directors believed that a firearm prohibition was efficacious in the maintenance of safe and secure campuses.

Disputes Could Turn Deadly if Firearms Allowed on Campus

Campus security directors uniformly indicated concern that if firearms were permitted on campus disputes could turn deadly. All CSDs were concerned that this could occur. This concern is very succinctly exemplified by participant CSD 6 in the statement:

[students are] very emotional at this age, especially with alcohol involved or any other type of dating situation; we've had people say they're gonna shoot themselves, we've had

peoples say their gonna shoot other people and they all had guns and they all had them on campus and you know they weren't supposed to and they were punished for it but really we have no way of stopping people from carrying guns. . . . So I think safety wise if we keep the guns out of people's hands we're saving a lot of potential problems. (CSD 6)

In support of this position participant, CSD 1 stated: "I honestly do not believe that anyone outside of law enforcement should be allowed to carry on campus." CSD 2 indicated that based on his experience many people are capable of safely operating a firearm, many do not possess the "maturity level and upbringing" for such a dangerous instrumentality.

Learning Environment Hindered Because Students Afraid to Express Opinions

Campus security directors were concerned that the presence of concealed firearms would hinder the learning environment for students. It would have a chilling effect to both students and instructors. Students would be afraid to freely express their opinions. Instructors would be afraid to give a bad grade to a student who may be carrying concealed a firearm. CSD 2 was very clear in stating that his primary function was to provide a "safe learning environment for the students, faculty, and staff" of his institution.

During one interview this researcher had to wait a short time while CSD 3 provided security to a community college instructor who was giving a student bad academic news. While the specifics of this situation were not explained to the researcher pursuant to federal privacy laws, it is a real life example of this subtheme. This occurrence is just one example of why personal interviews were conducted by the researcher on each individual campus. It is felt by the researcher that the time, effort, and money expended to accomplish personal interviews of every campus security director in the state of Wyoming added depth, texture, complexity and richness to this project not otherwise obtainable.

Participant CSD 3 indicated that if concealed carry firearms were allowed on campus, routine college anxieties and disputes might take on a deadly dynamic. As noted by CSD 3: "I

don't believe an academic setting is conducive to the presence of firearms." CSD 2 agreed that a learning environment is not the proper place for firearms. CSD 3 noted that "uncomfortableness" could exist between students if concealed firearms were allowed on campus. Students would be afraid to take a position contrary to that of another student who potentially might have a firearm. This would prevent students from experiencing true academic freedom. Without academic freedom the primary purposed of higher education is frustrated.

When asked about violent assaults that have occurred at his institution, participant CSD 3 gave an experiential example. CSD 3 noted that a violent physical assault between students occurred on his campus recently. No firearms were present or utilized. CSD 3 believes that had a firearm been present, an assault would have escalated into a "murder" rather than someone getting the "tar" beat out of them.

CSD 6 indicated his "greatest fear" was an "emotional accident" because a student or employee is "upset." CSD 6 stated, "I don't think it's safe to have untrained people in classrooms with guns." CSD 6 believes that a classroom should be inviolate when it comes to concealed firearms. CSD 1 said that when he attended school he felt "safe." He does not believe that a safety atmosphere exists today. When CSD 1 sought his education, a major concern was "academic freedom"; freedom in general, feeling safe; and being "able to speak your mind." He stated that if concealed carry firearms were allowed on campus a student would not feel free to speak his mind and would be afraid to "piss off" someone.

Instructors Afraid to do Their Jobs Because of Firearms in the Possession of Students

All participants agreed that the classroom is an inappropriate place for the concealed carry of a firearm. All participants believe that both instructors and students would be negatively affected by the concern that a firearm might be present in a classroom if the free carry of

concealed firearms were allowed on campus. This is best exemplified by CSD 3 who stated that instructors are not comfortable around firearms of any type. In addition, that a “strong majority believe that the classroom is definitely not the place for a firearm to be.” Further CSD 3 stated the presence of concealed firearms could “impact” an instructor’s “teaching abilities.” These instructors would be concerned when dealing with a student that “may be carrying a gun.” CSD 3 indicated that this was especially true “when it comes to failing him on a test or grading a paper down or something like that.”

Participant CSD 6 stated that a classroom is not the proper place for a firearm. CSD 6 stated, “I don’t think it is safe to have untrained people in the classrooms with guns, I just don’t.” In agreeing with this opinion, CSD 3 indicated that firearms can make common interpersonal confrontations dangerous or even deadly.

Unrestricted Concealed Firearms Hinder the Ability of Administrators to Make Decisions Regarding the Security of Their Institutions

To allow the free carry of concealed weapons would also “hinder” the ability of administrators and “decision makers” to do their jobs with regard to security on a given campus (CSD 1). As noted by CSD 1 the possession of firearms would “tie their hands.” Campus administrators would be unable to exercise their judgment in making the individual campuses safe and secure. Participant CSD 5 noted that most administrators maintained a “liberal institution” and were typically opposed to handguns on campus.

Safe Environment Currently Exists With Absence of Concealed Carry Firearms

There is a long list of incidents and crimes that occur on campuses that must be reported to a central public location pursuant to the Clery Act (United States Code, 2008). The Clery act is a federal law requiring higher education institutions to report certain crimes that occur on or

around their campuses. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Clery Act made risks the ability of colleges and universities to provide federal financial aid (United States Code, 2008). Institutions failing to appropriately report or try to hide incidents making their campuses seem safer are subject to severe federal sanctions. Such an incident recently occurred to Yale University where a large fine was imposed (Kingkade, 2013).

This research study involved questioning all participants about the most recent Clery Act data relevant to their institutions. It should be noted that campus security directors exercise a certain level of discretion in interpreting what activities are or not Clery Act violations. Interviews with Wyoming campus security directors showed uniformity with regard to the use of firearms in violent campus crimes. All participants addressing this specific issue indicated that no firearms were used in any violent campus crime. All participants said that no firearms were used in any violent crime reported pursuant to the Clery Act. Such absence of firearms in Clery Act violent crimes indicates that Wyoming community college districts are safe (U. S. Department of Education, 2014).

The researcher specifically discussed violent crimes that occurred on individual campuses. As an example, CSD 3 was asked if a firearm had been used in any violent campus crime. CSD 3 indicated, “no firearm was used at all.” When further pressed by the researcher, CSD 3 indicated, “again, no weapons or anything involved” in any Clery Act violent crimes. This line of questioning discussed not only use of a firearm by a perpetrator. This question also queried use of a firearm by a victim in self - defense.

Crimes on Campus Would Not Have Been Averted by Victim Possessing Firearm

Consideration of the attitudes, understandings and perceptions of campus security directors concerning self - defense was part of this research. CSD 2 indicted that possession of a

firearm by a victim would not prevent campus crimes. When asked to elaborate, CSD 2 indicated that the free possession of firearms in the “general public” did not prevent those same types of crimes.

This position was further supported by CSD 1 who said that he could not think of any crimes where a firearm was involved. He further stated that he was unaware of any circumstance on his campus where presence of a firearm would have “helped, hindered, or otherwise.”

Supporting information came from CSD 6 who said that in 14 years at his institution, no one had ever been shot.

CSD 3 was asked a hypothetical question concerning the possession of a firearm by a victim. This question asked if possession of a firearm by a victim might have prevented a crime. He was forceful in his negative answer. CSD 3 stated that sexual assaults on campus were largely perpetrated by use of alcohol where the victim is so “incapacitated,” a weapon would be of no use. CSD 3 presented a very graphic image concerning the problem of alcohol by stating, “the gun that the suspect used was alcohol.”

Location and Geography of Institution Provide a Safe Environment

Participants emphasized the rural nature of community colleges in Wyoming. This was noted as a reason for a safe campus regardless of the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms. Wyoming is a rural state with a low population. Participants believe that rural community colleges tend to be safer.

As noted by CSD 3: “I know one thing we have going for us compared to other colleges ... is our location.” Because of a very rural location, CSD 3 noted that his institution has a “different dynamic” than those other state colleges, which leads to a safer campus.

CSD 5 said that the location of his institution in a relatively safe environment helps maintain a safe campus. CSD 5 also said that the urban areas surrounding his institution are also relatively safe with a low crime rate. Participant CSD 7 noted that the location of his institution in a housing area, rather than near a town, assists in keeping that institution safe. The campus of CSD 7 is not close to businesses that serve alcohol, which helps maintain a safe campus.

First Responders Unable to Identify Perpetrators

A common concern among the Wyoming community college campus security directors was how law enforcement first responders would differentiate between perpetrators and non-perpetrators. CSD 7 indicated a concern that law enforcement may inadvertently shoot the first person they see with a gun. This could be true even if this first person was a student or instructor trying to neutralize a gunman.

All CSDs believed they had a good relationship with local law enforcement. Two CSDs had even previously worked with the local law enforcement agency. The response time for local law enforcement can be measured in minutes. These minutes may not be soon enough to prevent tragedy (Greenberg, 2007). CSD 4 further supported this point by indicating his institution was a “maze” that would require several minutes for first responders to navigate. First responders would have difficulty navigating such an institutional maze. Once the danger area was located, law enforcement could encounter a professor trying to protect his class rather than a violent gunman.

Super Ordinate Theme Three: Firearms are Irrelevant to Campus Security

The third super ordinate theme dealt with firearms being irrelevant to campus safety. This super ordinate theme is supported by 2 subthemes. Each super ordinate and subtheme is described below and supported by representative direct quotations. This emergent theme

indicated concealed carry firearms would not make a difference to the safety and security of an institution. The idea that concealed carry firearms were irrelevant to campus security is unique. It is not an issue significantly discussed in any literature or scholarly writings.

It is important to separate the concepts concerning the absence of concealed carry firearms versus their irrelevancy to campus safety. The absence of firearms (super ordinate theme 2) implicitly recognizes that firearms must not be present to enhance campus safety. This irrelevancy concept (super ordinate theme 3) indicates that the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms may be irrelevant to campus safety. These two super ordinate themes provide related but differing approaches concerning campus firearm safety.

CSD 3 stated the absence of guns does not influence safety on his campus. This position by CSD 3 is logical because participants believe that concealed carry firearms are already present on campus. Given that proposition, combined with no firearms being used in campus crimes, makes this position much more tenable. As noted by CSD 5: “You can put everybody out here [with] a firearm and there’s still going to be stuff. It’s not going to make a difference in the world.” CSD 5 called firearms on campus a “zero sum game.” CSD 6 confirmed this position by stating that crimes on campus will happen regardless and “I don’t think weapons have anything to do with it one way or the other.”

Concealed Firearms are Currently Present on College Campuses

Several campus security directors indicated that concealed carry firearms were already present on their campuses. CSD 4 stated: “I’m not naïve enough to believe that there are not already individuals bringing concealed weapons on campus.” CSD 5 noted that he was not “naïve” and that there were firearms on campus that had not come to his attention.

CSD 6 was questioned as to whether he thought concealed firearms influenced the safety of his institution. CSD 6 responded, “I don’t think it either helped or influenced one way or another ... like I said kids probably have these guns anyways, it’s not something I think [is] gonna make a big difference.” CSD 7 further indicated an irrelevancy of firearms by stating: “because they’re concealed you really don’t know so I suspect we have people [who] are carrying firearms on campus we don’t know about.” CSD 7 was concerned about what he termed a “false sense of security” because of the institutional firearm prohibition policy. CSD 7 stated that the college staff members “feel a little safer” because of the policy. But CSD 7 further acknowledged that there is always a “chance” someone would bring a firearm to campus in violation of policy or law.

Firearms not Used during any Campus Crimes

As noted earlier every CSD indicated that no violent Clery Act crimes were committed by use of a firearm at or on their institutions. Since firearms were not used to commit crimes, it was argued by all participants that firearms did not make a difference with regard to crime on any institution. Participant CSD 5 indicated that none of the crimes occurring on his institution were committed by use of a concealed carry or other firearm. Participant CSD 1 was asked about crimes on his campus and stated: “I can’t think of any since I have been supervisor that would have fallen under where a firearm being involved that would have helped hindered, or otherwise. It was just crimes of opportunity...”

Even violent crimes such as sexual assault did not involve any concealed carry firearm. Because of the fact that no firearms had ever been used in a violent campus crime, all questions concerning use of a firearm in self - defense had to be phrased hypothetically. Therefore, CSD 3 was asked a hypothetical question concerning the possession of a firearm by a victim in self -

defense. He was forceful in his negative answer. CSD 3 stated that sexual assaults on campus were largely perpetrated by use of alcohol where the victim is “incapacitated” to the point that a firearm would be of no use.

Super Ordinate Theme Four: Proactive Campus Security Departments and Strong Relations with Institutional Community Critically Important to Overall Security

The fourth super ordinate theme dealt with a proactive campus security department, which had strong relations with the institutional community as critically important to overall safety. This super ordinate theme had no subthemes. Such a campus security department had to be part of the college community and exhibit both honesty and integrity. When such a proactive stance was taken, participants felt that the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms were irrelevant.

Each campus security director who addressed this emergent theme credited the safety of their campuses to a proactive security department. The proactive stance described by participants included being visible and active in the campus community. The importance of “integrity” was stated. Of further importance was showing that the security department “cared” about the students and community (CSD 6).

Participant CSD 1 indicated that his department was very involved in making sure everyone complied with the firearms prohibition policy. The security department makes it known that such prohibition is for “everyone’s safety” and opportunities’ to report violations of the firearm policy are many (CSD 1). CSD 1 wants everyone to be “safe” while they are on campus.

As noted by CSD 2: “I think we’ve got a proactive safety department here at the college.” CSD 2 credits this proactive approach as important to the safety and security of his institution. Being a part of the community is important to the overall well being of the campus.

CSD 3 indicated that his security department does programs, visits with students, and stays visible. They are present in the cafeteria, dining halls, and classrooms, which provides a “level of comfort and understanding” that the campus security department is not just there to enforce the rules. Students become aware that “they actually are invested and care about us” (CSD 3). “You build a sense of community and trust with them (campus community)” (CSD 3). CSD 3 noted the importance that all members of a campus safety department be “honest” with everybody’s interest in mind. These members must display “integrity” (CSD3).

CSD 6 is on an early alert team at his institution that deals with persons who are having emotional problems. Such membership is an effective and proactive method for a campus security director to check on people who may require medication or turn violent. CSD 6 notes that it helps a lot and that “we’ve averted a lot of potential problems just by being able to reach out to some kids and taking care of them before they get to that point ...”

It is clear that all participants believe involvement in the college community is critical. Developing a caring attitude of trust and integrity is critical in the development of a safe and secure institutional environment. This proactive stance was noted as critical by all participants in this research study to maintain campus firearm safety. It is through such a proactive stance that campus security officers become a trustworthy part of the campus community.

Conclusion

The safety of students and other campus constituents are an important consideration of Wyoming community colleges. Campus security directors are responsible for the maintenance

of a violence free college environment. The issue of concealed carry firearms on campus is placed squarely upon the shoulders of these campus safety and security officials (Wyoming Legislature, 2011).

The researcher sought the perceptions, attitudes and understanding of campus security directors concerning concealed carry firearms. The data provided by campus security directors' perceptions, attitudes, and understandings were analyzed. This analysis led to a greater overall understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors as they relate to the concealed carry of firearms on college campuses.

CHAPTER FIVE: SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of campus security directors concerning concealed carry firearms. This study further sought to examine how these campus security director attitudes, understandings, and perceptions might influence or inform practices concerning concealed firearms on institutional campuses. The data obtained from community college campus security directors was specific to concealed carry firearms at Wyoming community colleges.

This study contributes a new perspective concerning community college campus safety. Even though the tragedies at institutions of higher education have received national attention, there is a paucity of research and scholarly writing addressing issues of firearm violence on campus (Thompson, et al., 2009). Ultimately, the issue of high profile shootings becomes one of firearms' existence on college and university campuses. The perceptions, attitudes and understandings of Wyoming community college campus security directors illuminated the issue of concealed carry firearms at Wyoming community college districts.

Four super ordinate themes emerged from the data, supported by fifteen subthemes. The super ordinate themes and subthemes are listed and discussed below. Participants' perceptions, attitudes and understandings were viewed within the context of law, current literature, and scholarly writings. Current literature is synthesized with the evaluation of the research findings. These elements are then synthesized into a holistic and inclusive analysis. This holistic analysis provides a focused and concise evaluation of research as it relates to emergent themes. A synthesis of data and literature concerning each super ordinate and subtheme will be addressed in the following subsections.

Analysis of Super Ordinate Theme One: Presence of Concealed Carry Firearms May Enhance Campus Safety

It was arguably the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting that brought the issue of campus firearm safety into sharp focus. Until this recent tragedy, colleges were considered comparatively safe environments (Smith T. N., 2012). Following the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois, and Oikos University, advocates for the possession of firearms have suggested that widespread carry of concealed firearms makes colleges and universities more secure (Fox, 2008).

Several subthemes were developed under super ordinate theme one that the presence of concealed carry firearms could potentially enhance safety. These subthemes are:

- The presence of concealed carry firearms may increase safety on Wyoming community colleges when there is appropriate training;
- Even though the presence of concealed carry firearms can make a community college safer it can only be so if possessors are properly vetted;
- Concealed carry firearms are already present on campus in violation of campus policy and Wyoming law;
- Firearms might be functional in self defense and avert crime;
- Increased costs and expenses to Wyoming community colleges.

The above listed subthemes developed from research relating to concealed carry firearms enhancing campus safety.

The Presence of Concealed Carry Firearms May Increase Safety on Wyoming Community Colleges when there is Appropriate Training

Potentially the concealed carry of firearms can enhance safety. It was noted by several Wyoming campus security directors that in the proper circumstances, firearms might enhance

safety. One requirement for possession is appropriate training. Such training would be for students and staff alike. Campus security directors were adamant that any person carrying concealed firearms would need to have rigorous training similar to law enforcement professionals.

The literature indicates that only appropriate persons without a history of criminal offenses or serious mental issues should be allowed to carry firearms in a concealed manner (Lott & Mustard, 1997). This implies that appropriate persons would act or react rationally in a shooting situation. Such a position in the literature is overly optimistic and unrealistic as indicated by campus security directors in this research.

Campus security director participants stated that concealed firearms possessors would require significant training to enhance campus safety. Such training is necessary if firearms are to enhance the security and safety of an educational institution. The data provided by the participants required training by the possessors of concealed firearms. The literature required only that such possessors be free from a history of criminal offenses or mental illness.

Proponents of the free carry of concealed firearms on campus frequently cite the research of John Lott and David B. Mustard concerning gun and crime issues. The Lott and Mustard research utilized annual, cross sectional, time series, county level crime data within the United States from 1977 to 1992 for investigating the impact of “shall issue” right to carry firearm laws (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 5). The Lott and Mustard study was the first study to use cross sectional, time series evidence for state and national levels (Lott & Mustard, 1997). This study noted variations in “arrest” and “crime rates” between rural and urban areas (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 31). This research controlled whether lower crimes rates resulted from “gun laws” or other differences in the area (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 31).

The Lott and Mustard (1997) research posited that the passage of firearms possession laws resulted in a reduction of some violent crimes (Lott & Mustard, 1997). Further, a small and “statistically insignificant” change in accidental deaths would have occurred if “shall issue right to carry laws” were enacted (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 31). According to Lott and Mustard (1997) if the nation as a whole adopted “right to carry” concealed handgun provisions in 1992 a minimum of “1,570 murders and over 4,177 rapes would have been avoided” (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 31). This data further indicated that property crimes of stealth would have increased (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 31). In addition it should be noted that the effect of shall issue laws varies with a county’s population and crime rate (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 31).

The perceptions, attitudes and understandings of Wyoming campus security directors are consistent with the position of Lott and Mustard. Lott and Mustard (1997) presuppose that citizens without criminal records or histories of mental illness will act correctly in a shooting situation. Wyoming campus security directors posit that correct action by citizens is more likely if training is mandated and supervised. If training is mandated and supervised, campus security directors suggest that the presence of concealed carry firearms could enhance college safety.

Persons who support the concealed carry of firearms hypothesize that campus constituents would be unable to protect themselves or others from a criminal possessing such a firearm (Fennell, 2009). Supporters of the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms argue that the death toll at Virginia Tech “might have been lower had students, other than the gunman, been armed” (Fox, 2008, p. 48). CSD 5 noted that it is conjectural whether a student would possess the deadly mindset necessary to use a firearm in self - defense (CSD 5).

A synthesis of the literature and this research provides a relatively clear picture of what would be required to make campuses safer by the presence of concealed carry firearms. To carry

concealed firearms, possessors must be free of any history of criminal offenses or mental illness. In addition, training must be thorough and continuous. Those individuals permitted to carry concealed firearms on campus must be trained to act or react appropriately in a dangerous or deadly situation. When these conditions are met, certain research participants believe campus safety and security may be enhanced.

Even Though the Presence of Concealed Carry Firearms can make a Community College Safer it can only be so if Possessors are Properly Vetted

Participants were comfortable with concealed firearms on their institutions only if security offices were responsible for selecting those persons allowed to carry. By having campus security offices responsible for this selection, candidates could be properly vetted. This vetting would be combined with training to ensure proper handling of concealed carry firearms. It was intimated that such vetting would go far beyond what is required to obtain a Wyoming concealed carry license (CSD 4).

Lott and Mustard (1997) indicated that the prospective decrease in murders could be up to three times higher than overall accidental deaths in those states requiring the issuance of concealed firearms permits. Their research concluded that “allowing citizens without criminal records or histories of significant mental illness to carry concealed handguns deters violent crime and appears to produce an extremely small and statistically insignificant change in accidental discharges” (Lott & Mustard, 1997, p. 31). Ultimately, this research indicated a net saving of human lives through the carrying of concealed firearms (Lott & Mustard, 1997).

Relevant literature recognizes that only certain persons should be allowed to carry firearms in a concealed manner (IACLEA, 2008; Harnish, 2008). The literature is consistent with data and information received from participants. If anything, Wyoming campus security

directors provided information that is more stringent than the literature. Wyoming campus security directors would want to control the processes for both vetting and training potential candidates. Additionally, approved individuals must be reviewed periodically to assure continued suitability.

Increasing the presence of concealed carry firearms on campus has the potential to make an institution safer. However, this will happen only if the campus security office can control who possessed these firearms and maintain oversight of training. It should be noted that no Wyoming community college campus security director supported the free and unrestricted concealed carry of firearms. It is only within the strict parameters of extensive identity vetting and significant training that the concealed carry of firearms might enhance safety on a campus.

Concealed Carry Firearms are Already Present on Campus in Violation of Campus Policy and Wyoming Law

Certain participants noted that concealed carry firearms are already present on campus. Such presence is in violation of both college policy and Wyoming law. Therefore, those persons feeling a need to possess such firearms are already doing so. The literature on this topic is silent. No relevant literature or scholarly writings specifically indicated that firearms were already present on college campuses in violation of institutional policies and state law.

Wyoming community college campus security directors surmise that most possessors of concealed carry firearms are law-abiding persons. Therefore allowing concealed carry firearms on campus might enhance campus safety by providing security officials notice of those persons with firearms. A change in policy allowing concealed carry firearms would enhance campus safety because security directors would know the identity and location of possessors. This added information would allow campus security directors to more efficiently perform their duties.

Firearms Might be Functional in Self - defense and Avert Crime

This subtheme was developed in the hypothetical by necessity. Participants were unaware of any firearm being used in a violent campus crime. They further believed that firearms possessed by a victim would not have prevented any of the violent campus crimes occurring at their institutions. A victim possessing a “deadly” mindset could potentially use a firearm in self - defense (CSD 5). This was considered true, even though such situations had not occurred on any participant institutions. This subtheme is the foundation for much of the current relevant literature. Such literature posits that a victim or student could use a firearm to prevent or at least minimize damage caused by an individual wielding a firearm (Fennell, 2009; Harnish, 2008).

CSD 5 indicated that the possession of a firearm by a victim might avert a crime. However, CSD 5 was clear that this opinion was hypothetical and that any such victim would need be willing to use deadly force. CSD 5 noted the likeliness of such a deadly force mindset as problematic at best. Nevertheless, CSD 5 did recognize that self - defense use could exist depending on circumstances. CSD 5 noted that such use in self - defense was purely situational. CSD 5 did recognize the potential of a victim using the concealed firearm as an instrumentality of self - defense.

Participants were unable to provide concrete examples on their campuses where a firearm may have prevented a crime or victimization (Fennell, 2009; Cao, Zhang, & He, 2008; Desmond, 2008; Regents of the University of Colorado v. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus, 2012; Lott & Mustard, 1997). There can be no dispute that in the proper circumstances a firearm can prevent victimization. Whether such a proper circumstance might occur is unknown and unknowable based on this research. Nonetheless, what has not occurred is difficult to measure.

Campus security directors stated that if a crime was prevented by use of a concealed firearm it is unlikely that it came to their attention.

Increased Costs and Expenses to Wyoming Community Colleges

Campus security officers could no longer be paid a part time or hourly wage. In fact one participant indicated that costs would rise “exponentially” (CSD 4). Institutions would have their budgets impacted for equipment and training. Further economic impact would occur with regard to safety officer salaries. Participants indicated that allowing concealed carry of firearms would increase the financial and budgetary cost to the institution.

Security funding should not be reactive (CSD 4). Providing money after a campus tragedy has occurred is not acceptable. Administrators, campus security directors and other decision makers need to make a financial commitment to safety and security of their institutions. Software, firearms, training, bulletproof vests, and other equipment can be expensive. It is necessary to make financial provisions for these increased costs each budget cycle. Decision makers can no longer assume that a safe campus will continue in the future as in the past. The recent human tragedy occurring on campuses has put an end to business as usual.

It is critical that college administrators and decisions makers devote time and energy to the issues of campus safety. Some participants recognized that their institutions did not have a financial commitment to safety and security. It must be on the same level as budgetary and financial concerns. A recent newspaper article entitled “MCCCD weighs tuition hike to bolster campus security” (Faller, 2013) stated that a tuition increase for students at Maricopa (Arizona) Community Colleges would pay for a fundamental change in the districts’ security culture.

Administrators and other decision makers at community colleges must put effort and time into college safety and security. The days of violence free campuses, if they ever existed, are

past. Administrators must be concerned with safety of campus constituents. This includes a cost benefit analysis in institutional budgets for security at colleges.

Super Ordinate Theme Two: Absence of Concealed

Carry Firearms May Enhance Campus Safety

Campus security directors at Wyoming community colleges were uniform in their satisfaction with a policy prohibiting the carry of concealed firearms on campus. Participants felt that a concealed firearms prohibition on their campus was an effective way to enhance safety and security. The statement of CSD 2 best exemplifies this: “I think it’s definitely safer to have things the way they are with nobody allowed to carry”.

Eight subthemes developed explaining why the absence of concealed carry firearms on college campuses promoted safety and security. All developed subthemes used the words of participants to show why a campus firearm prohibition was efficacious in maintaining safe and secure campuses. Subthemes describing super ordinate theme two are listed below.

- Disputes could turn deadly if firearms allowed on campus;
- Learning environment is hindered if students afraid to speak because of concern neighbor has a firearm;
- Instructors afraid to do their jobs because of concern for firearms in the possession of students;
- Free carry of concealed firearms hinder the ability of administrators to make decisions regarding the security of their institutions;
- Safe environment currently exists with absence of concealed carry firearms;
- Crimes on campus would not have been averted by victim possessing firearm;
- Location and geography of institution provides a safe environment;

- First responders unable to identify perpetrators.

Through a synthesis of participant data and literature, certain elements important in creating a safe college environment were illuminated.

Disputes Could Turn Deadly if Firearms Allowed on Campus

No participants supported the free and unrestricted concealed carry of firearms. All participants were concerned that allowing such free and uncontrolled carry of concealed firearms could lead to campus tragedy. One primary concern was that students could use firearms to resolve disputes and confrontations. Arguments between roommates or acquaintances could escalate to deadly confrontations.

Some research has indicated that students who carry firearms also engage in a number of other high risk activities (Bouffard et al., 2011). A greater number of armed students experienced potential criminal problems than those who went unarmed (Presley et al., 1997). Siebel indicated that college students and firearms can be a very dangerous combination (Siebel, 2007 - 2008).

Concern about an increased level of suicide by students was also expressed. Harnisch (2008) suggested that the availability of firearms on campuses could increase campus suicide rates (Harnisch, 2008). Most universities and colleges ban firearms from their campus and “most campus police chiefs recognize that allowing students to carry concealed firearms on campus would not prevent firearm violence on these campuses” (Thompson et al. 2009, p. 252). Students are commonly emotionally immature. This immaturity, combined with the normal stressors inherent in college life, and firearms could be recipe for disaster. By factoring in alcohol and other drugs, participants expressed serious concern over the presence of firearms.

Even with the best of intentions, armed students or employees could escalate an already explosive situation further with accidents causing harm by use of a firearm in a situation

where such use is not warranted. Likewise, police could mistake the attacker for an armed student or employee (or vice versa) during a situation in which failure to make quick discernible judgments can be extraordinarily costly for all parties involved. (Harnisch, 2008, p. 5)

While such mistakes by police are unlikely due to their training and experience, the possibility must be considered. In an active shooter situation at a college or university, minutes are important (Greenberg, 2007).

The presence of firearms could lead to conflicts between roommates, classmates, and others on campus escalating to the point where one or more individuals could be injured or killed as a result of gun violence (Harnisch, 2008). Some authors have indicated that an increased risk of firearm tragedy exists when guns are allowed on college campuses (Price et al., 2009). Colleges bring students with “preexisting and emerging mental health concerns into high stress environments away from support and coping structures” (Schafer et al., 2010).

The Colorado Supreme Court in 2012 issued a decision striking down a prohibition of concealed carry firearms on the campus of the University of Colorado (Regents of the University of Colorado v. Students for Concealed Carry on Campus, 2012). A review of Clery Act data shows no significant change in violent crimes in 2012 following that ruling by the Colorado Supreme Court (U. S. Department of Education, 2014). It should be noted that the 2013 Clery Act data has yet to be published at this time. That data may tell a different story.

By synthesizing current relevant literature and participant responses, it is apparent that the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms is an anathema to a safe and secure institutional environment. Participants agreed with literature indicating an increase of campus violence if concealed firearms were freely allowed by anyone. Clearly indicated by both the literature and participant information is a prohibition on the unrestricted carry of concealed weapons. To allow

such would likely increase campus violence. Such unrestricted carry of concealed firearms would impede and impair a safe campus environment and should not be allowed.

Learning Environment is Hindered if a Student Afraid to Speak Because of Concern Neighbor has a Firearm

Participants were afraid the learning environment would be hindered if concealed carry of firearms were permitted. The implications of campus violence can affect mental health, fear, and learning success (Randa, 2010). Students could be fearful to speak freely. Research participants felt the unrestricted concealed carry of firearms could damage academic freedom, long the hallmark for institutions of higher education.

A synthesis of current literature (Birnbaum, 2012; IACLEA, 2008) and participant data indicates the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms would impair the learning environment. Students would be afraid to freely express their opinions for fear of a student with an opposing view possessing a firearm. Freedom of expression, a symbol of higher education, would be impeded due to fear of deadly instrumentality. Keeling argued that there is no rational reason why a student would require a firearm at college (Keeling, 1999).

Instructors Afraid to do Their Jobs Because Of Firearms in the Possession of Students

This developed as a corollary to subtheme two. This subtheme developed independently with regard to instructors and the fear of concealed carry firearms. The teaching environment could be hindered because of instructors frightened to do their jobs. Professors would be afraid to deliver negative academic news. Concealed carry firearms could have a chilling effect on a basic function of college faculty.

One article involving a state university in Georgia cited that “by and large” college faculty are generally opposed to allowing the concealed carry of firearms on campuses (Bennett

et al., 2012, p. 350). Villahermosa declared that firearms should not be possessed by students, professors, or administrators (Villahermosa, 2008).

A synthesis of current literature and data specifies that the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms would hinder the learning environment. Instructors and professors would fear to give students negative academic news. They might be afraid to make unpopular statements in the classroom. Instructors would be unable to do their jobs because of the fear of students, or even colleagues. With instructors afraid to do their jobs, it could be argued that the purpose of higher education is partially or even totally thwarted.

Free Carry of Concealed Firearms Hinder the Ability of Administrators to Make Decisions Regarding the Security of Their Institutions

Subthemes 2 and 3 dealt with the chilling effect that unrestricted concealed carry firearms have on both students and instructors. This next subtheme deals with the effect of concealed firearms on administrators and executives of higher education campuses. This subtheme, while related to 2 and 3, developed independently and provides a different view of institutional harm.

The unrestricted carry of concealed carry of firearms would hinder the ability of administrators to make decisions concerning institutional safety. Such administrators would deal primarily with the presence of concealed carry firearms. College decision makers would be unable to discuss other issues that could potentially enhance the overall safety of their campuses. Such things as lighting, notification systems, intercoms, or other safety issues would be set aside by a need to address the concealed carry of firearms on campus. Those college decision makers, who are responsible for the safety and security of campuses, primarily oppose the unrestricted carry of concealed weapons on campus (Harnisch, 2008).

A synthesis of current literature and data indicates the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms deters the overall college safety. Colleges are made less safe if firearms are carried with no restrictions of any sort. Administrators and college decision makers would be overwhelmed with issues presented by the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms. Other issues that could improve campus safety would be set aside by necessity. The concealed carry of firearms would engulf all other issues that could lead to a safer college community.

Subthemes two, three and four all deal with reasons why students, instructors, and administrators would be negatively influenced by the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms. The three major components of the college constituency would be harmed by the free carry of concealed firearms. Clearly, not just students are affected by this issue, but instructors and administrators as well.

Safe Environment Currently Exists with Absence of Concealed Carry of Firearms

All participants who had long experience at their jobs were confident that no crimes had been committed on their campuses using concealed carry firearms. As noted previously, the Clery Act requires that institutions of higher education report certain crimes, both violent and nonviolent, to a central reporting location (United States Code, 2008). No experienced campus security director knew of any firearm used in a campus crime. Several participants were new in their jobs and were unable to comment on that issue. It is imperative to note that not one participant was aware of a concealed carry firearm being used in a campus crime.

Colleges and universities are easy targets for violent perpetrators due to their population, minimal law enforcement, openness, and the anonymity on most campuses (Boynton, 2003). College campuses, while typically safer than their surrounding communities, are still vulnerable to violence (Sulkowski & Lazarus, 2011). Campus attacks are usually short in duration, which

provide virtually no time for law enforcement to arrive or become involved in any brutal situation (Greenberg, 2007). Nonetheless, the past does not predict the future. The fact that no violent crime has occurred on participants' campuses utilizing concealed carry firearms does not mean that such will not happen. Violence on campuses must be considered a potentiality at every campus.

Crimes on Campus Would not have Been Averted by Victim Possessing Firearm

Earlier subthemes ask whether a concealed carry firearm could have been used as an instrumentality of self - defense. This subtheme deals directly with the question of concealed carried firearms as an instrument of self - defense. No participant felt that the possession of a firearm by a victim would have prevented a crime on his campuses. This was surprising, as it seems self - evident that a firearm can act as an instrument of self - defense. Regardless of this, no participants felt that a firearm would have prevented a crime that had occurred on their campuses.

Most participants opined that possession of a firearm would not have prevented any of the crimes that had occurred on their institutional campuses. Only one (CSD 5) acknowledged that a hypothetical victim could potentially use a firearm in self - defense. CSD 5 did acknowledge that in a proper situation, a firearm could potentially serve as an instrumentality of self - defense. He further indicated that such a victim would have to be in a mindset that allowed the use of deadly force. CSD 5 stated that most victims do not have that mindset. CSD 5 stated the possession of a firearm would not have prevented any actual crimes occurring on his institutional campus.

The fact that no firearms were used in campus crimes does not mean a college is immune to violence. All participants were aware of this reality. Violence on campuses must be

considered a potentiality for every campus. A properly identified and trained victim is likely to act or react correctly in a dangerous situation. While such has not yet occurred on participants' campuses, such potentiality was recognized.

Location and Geography of Institution Provides a Safe Environment

During this research participants indicated that the rural nature of Wyoming community colleges and campus location was an important aspect of safety. Each participant venturing an opinion noted that the rurality and geography of his or her campuses increased safety. Such safe environments specifically noted by participants included being surrounded by grasslands, far from interstates or located away from alcohol serving establishments. Participants noted location as important to campus safety. The rural nature of Wyoming lends itself to campus safety. It is important to recognize that the information provided by campus security directors of Wyoming community colleges may not be transferable or even applicable to campuses in a more urban setting. Since Wyoming is the least populous state in the nation, all participants provided information from this perspective.

CSD 5 said that the location of his institution in a relatively safe environment helps maintain a safe campus. CSD 5 also said that the urban areas surrounding his institution are also relatively safe with a low crime rate. Participant CSD 7 noted that the location of his institution in a housing area, rather than near a town assists in keeping that institution safe. The campus of CSD 7 is not close to businesses that serve alcohol, which helps maintain a safe campus.

Table 2 compares 2011 Clery Act data for Wyoming, to that of the two most populous states, California and Texas (U. S. Department of Commerce United States Census Bureau, 2014). This comparison uses 2011 census data. 2011 population census data is used since it coincides with the most current Clery Act data used in this research. Wyoming has a 2011 total

population estimate of 568,158 persons, which makes it the least populous state in the nation (U. S. Department of Commerce United States Census Bureau, 2014). California and Texas have 2011 population estimates of 37,691,912 and 19,465,197 respectively (U. S. Department of Commerce United States Census Bureau, 2014). Table 2 is aggregate data by state, which has not been subject to any rigorous statistical analysis. The aggregate data shown in table 2 below, suggests that when compared on a statewide basis; Wyoming has fewer violent campus crimes in certain Clery Act areas than the more populous states of California or Texas.

Table 2

2011 Clery Act aggregate data, Criminal Offenses, Public 2 – Year, On Campus (United States Code, 2008)

Offenses	Wyoming	California	Texas	U.S. or Outlying Area
Murder/Non-negligent manslaughter	0	0	0	2
Negligent manslaughter	0	0	0	0
Sex offenses – Forcible	2	47	20	262
Sex offenses - Non-forcible	0	5	3	18
Robbery	1	85	27	270
Aggravated				

assault	5	97	33	439
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It is apparent that certain crimes such as murder or manslaughter do not vary in the 2011 Clery Act data between the differing population states of Wyoming, California and Texas (United States Code, 2008). Differences are seen in the other Clery offenses such as forcible and non-forcible sex offenses, robbery and aggravated assault. This data suggests that certain differences exist because of population, but are not uniform for all Clery Act reportable offenses. This comparison is simply based on an aggregate of state wide and national numbers. It does not compare the number of violent crimes per institutional campus, nor by actual state population. These comparisons may show a different picture regarding overall campus crime rates. Such an analysis is left to future research.

First Responders Unable To Identify Perpetrators

A common fear expressed by research participants was the problem that could be experienced by law enforcement first responders. In the tragic event of an active shooter situation, responding law enforcement may act in error and mistake a student trying to protect others as the culprit. This would have the deadly results of shooting a person who is trying to help.

This research indicated that this concern, while important, could be addressed by training. Students or employees trying to contain a gunman on campus could be trained to put down their gun and “surrender” upon police intervention. This would remove any concerns about first responders making a deadly mistake. Further, close cooperation between campuses and local law enforcement could further minimize this problem. If select employees or students have their pictures present at police departments, or train with law enforcement, this problem is minimized.

Also, bulletproof vests or other identifying clothing could likewise minimize such a mistake. In addition, law enforcement is trained to deal with situations where you cannot tell the Good Samaritans from the perpetrators.

As noted by Harnisch (2008), police could mistake an attacker for an armed student or employee (or vice versa) during a situation in which failure to make quick discernible judgments can be extraordinarily costly for all parties involved (Harnisch, 2008, p. 5). A synthesis of relevant literature (Greenberg, 2007; Fennell, 2009; Fox, 2008) and research indicates that a college can no longer rely on law enforcement to keep the campus safe. While response time can typically be measured in, minutes that is far too long (Greenberg, 2007). An active shooter can accomplish much damage in mere minutes. Training by those properly in possession of firearms would include appropriate procedures to follow when law enforcement responded to a campus situation. Such training would further minimize any error by law enforcement first responders.

Super Ordinate Theme Three: Concealed Carry Firearms

Make No Difference Concerning Campus Safety

This super ordinate theme provided unexpected information to the researcher that concealed firearms are currently present on Wyoming community college campuses. The logic of participants, regarding super ordinate theme 3 was two-fold. First, firearms are currently present on campus without the knowledge of institutional security directors. Next, even with this presumed presence, no firearms had been used in college crimes. Therefore, participants believed that the presence or absence of firearms would not influence the safety and security environment.

There were two subthemes to super ordinate theme 3 which are listed below:

- Concealed Firearms are currently present on college campuses; and

- Firearms not used during any campus crimes.

These two subthemes were discussed by campus security directors as explaining the possibility of firearm irrelevancy concerning safety on their institutional campuses.

Firearms are Currently Present on College Campuses

Campus security directors stated that firearms are presumably already present on campus without their knowledge. This revelation was particularly surprising in light of the campus ban on firearms and Wyoming law. No opinion was expressed whether such knowledge would help or hurt in a deadly situation. This lack of opinion is unsurprising as such harm or assistance is problematic and hypothetical. Since no firearms have been used in campus crimes, and are likely already present, participants felt that allowing concealed firearms would not affect campus safety.

Certain participants felt that if the concealed carry of firearms were allowed, those currently possessing such weapons would provide that information to the campus security department. Campus security directors believe that those persons carrying concealed firearms are primarily law abiding. Participants indicated that such possessors are only carrying surreptitiously because they are forced to by institutional rules and policies. If such carry were not against policy, they would come forward and provide the information of firearm possession. This information of who possessed concealed carry firearms would allow campus security directors to accomplish their duties more efficiently. This position is somewhat ironic in that by concealing firearms in violation of campus policy and state statute, possessors should not be considered law abiding. Such possession of a concealed firearm on campus is itself a violation of policy and law.

Firearms not Used During any Campus Crimes

While the death toll on college and university campuses continues to rise, the relationship between firearms and crime is being challenged (Ayles & Donohue, 2003). Almost four years prior to the Virginia Tech massacre, Ian Ayres of Yale Law School and John J. Donohue of Stanford Law School disputed data and arguments made by Lott and Mustard concerning the concept that more guns equate to less crime. Ayres and Donohue argued that the statistical evidence relied upon by Lott and Mustard is “limited, sporadic and extraordinarily fragile” (Ayles & Donohue, 2003, p. 1201).

Ayles and Donohue (2003) stated that “if anything, there is stronger evidence that laws promoting guns increase crime, than there is for the conclusion they decrease it” (Ayles & Donohue, 2003, p. 1202). It is problematic whether the Ayres and Donohue (2003) research might have taken a different tack were it conducted subsequent to the Virginia Tech and other recent tragedies. Ayres and Donohue (2003) promulgated their research many years before the occurrence of more recent campus tragedies.

Research participants, who expressed an opinion on this issue, stated that the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms had no effect on campus safety. There had been no use of firearms in campus crime on any participant college campuses. Campus security directors stated it was the proactive stance of their offices that made institutions safe and secure.

Policies allowing the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms would not increase the number of such weapons on campus. Those people feeling the need for a concealed carry firearm already possess same in secret, but are law abiding people. Allowing concealed carry of firearms would merely provide additional information to the campus security department. This would provide knowledge and information campus security directors currently lack.

Super Ordinate Theme Four: Proactive Security Departments with Strong Institutional Relations Critically Important to Campus Safety

The findings related to super ordinate theme four cut across all data obtained in this research. Universally the participants indicated the importance of a campus security department being involved in the college community. This proactive stance would ideally allow campus security offices to become aware of potential problems, prior to violence erupting.

This finding also cut across all participant demographics. This cross cutting theme was true whether the campus security department was armed or not. It was true whether participants were in single or multiple person departments. It was true whether participants had a significant law enforcement background or not. By becoming an important, active, and trusted part of the institutional community, participants were able to obtain knowledge of future problems. Such proactivity allowed CSD 5 to diffuse potential deadly situations before they transpired.

As trusted members of the college community, students and employees could contact campus security officers while maintaining confidentiality. Student and employees could contact security officers knowing they cared about firearm safety. Being a visible and trusted part of the campus community was considered critical to the overall firearm safety of the campus.

The importance of creating an image of trust and caring cannot be overstated. Being visible in safety seminars and trainings is one way to accomplish this component of campus security. One participant was a member of his institution's students of concern committee. This was not an official part of participant's actual job duties. Nonetheless, this participant felt that it was important to the efficient functioning of his department. It allowed him to become aware of potential persons of concern before any deadly confrontation developed.

A synthesis of participant responses indicates that a policy allowing the unrestricted carry of concealed firearms may be irrelevant to campus security. This is somewhat counter intuitive and in opposition to most literature. Yet research participants indicate this is the most important aspect of security and safety at a Wyoming community college. Campus security departments must strive to create and maintain a reputation for integrity and honesty. The campus community must see campus security officers as trustworthy and honorable. Through this approach, campuses can enhance the safety, security, and learning environment regardless of the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms.

Revelations to Researcher

There were two unexpected revelations to the researcher. The first was the idea that firearms were present on campuses without the knowledge of campus security directors. Campus security directors said it would be naïve to assume there were no firearms on campus. Participant information indicates that a ban on anything at a community college in Wyoming does not ensure the banned item or substance will not be present.

The second major surprise was that the presence or absence of firearms may not influence safety at Wyoming community colleges. Certain participants indicated that firearms possession would not affect the safety and security of their institutions. Rather it was a proactive stance and involvement in the campus community that was important. The importance of constructing an image emphasizing integrity, honesty and caring must not be minimized. Campus security departments must endeavor to create and maintain a reputation for honor and integrity.

The literature does not speak to the lack of influence concerning concealed carry firearms on campus safety. There are few articles or other scholarly writings, which make the point that firearms might be irrelevant to campus safety. The literature, as noted earlier, falls in one of two

cognitive camps. Either the presence of concealed carry firearms makes a campus safer or the absence does.

These two positions can be summarized by the statement that either concealed carry firearms should be present or absent to enhance campus safety (Birnbaum, 2012). Most of the literature does not discuss the insignificance of concealed carry firearms to campus safety. Participants noted that the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms was not a critical factor in the overall safety and security of Wyoming community college districts.

Call to Action

Administrators and college decision makers must give the safety and security of campus community the same attention, resources, thought, and concern given to finances. They must be concerned with the safety of students, employees, and themselves. All campus constituents must be considered. Resources and funding must be allocated to this important aspect of higher education.

Campus safety departments must be proactive. This proactive stance means more than just enforcing campus rules and policies. Students and employees must view campus security departments as caring and trustworthy. Proactive practices must be mandated. This includes membership on students of concern teams and other processes dealing with problematic situations. Campus security departments must be a visible and trusted part of the college community.

Campus security directors must take an active role in educating students on safety. They must put on seminars regarding important security issues. Campus safety departments cannot be reactive. Campus safety offices must be proactive. A proactive stance is critical to the security of Wyoming community college districts.

Recommendations for Further Research

As with all research studies, many questions are left unanswered and mandate further research. This study is no exception. There are several areas where further research is indicated. It should be noted that the concept of safety at higher education institutions will always be important. Issues not even considered in this research can and will become critical to the future maintenance of a safe and secure campus. Several important unanswered questions were developed during this research, which require further inquiry.

An aspect of this research that needs to be addressed is the distinction between urban and rural campuses. This research considered every community college in Wyoming. It is important to note that none of these colleges could be considered urban. Wyoming is the least populated state in the union.

Many participants couched their responses concerning campus safety within the paradigm of their rural and geographical nature. As noted earlier, rurality is a function of institutions' state and community. Nonetheless, the concept of geography is much more controllable. This geography concept deals with the actual surroundings of an institution.

No research information was gathered concerning urban colleges. Many participants expressly commented that the security of their campuses was related to their rural nature and actual surrounding geography. Therefore, an important further research component would be a study concerning urban community colleges and the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms.

It is imperative to note that this research in no way addressed the open carry of firearms. This research did not address how the open carry of firearms might enhance or impair campus safety. It was concerned only with the effect of concealed carry firearms on campuses.

Therefore an important research project would be the study of openly carried firearms and the effect such might have on campus security.

Conclusion

College campuses are comparatively safe environments, nonetheless, tragic events will continue to occur and further increase the pressures exerted on policy makers to do something, or nothing. This analysis of Wyoming public community college districts will not provide a solution for policy makers wrestling with the proper role of concealed firearms on higher education campuses. Nonetheless, it may be a foundation upon which a sensible concealed carry firearm policy might be crafted. This research also provides important information for further study and research of relevant firearms issues.

Through those processes, procedures, and methods used in this research, the researcher obtained significant insights into the attitudes, understandings and perceptions of campus security directors. Their attitudes, understandings and perceptions concerning the influence of concealed carry firearms on institutional firearm safety environments was examined, analyzed, and explored. This research study led to a clearer understanding of how campus security directors perceive the influence of concealed carry firearms on Wyoming community college firearm safety environments. This research illuminated the relation of concealed carry firearms to campus firearm safety at Wyoming community college districts.

Since the inception of this research, several school and student related tragedies have occurred. They include the Newtown, Connecticut, Sandy Hook Elementary tragedy. Another massacre called the “Batman” shooting happened at an Aurora, Colorado theatre perpetrated by a University of Colorado student. A shooting occurred at Arapahoe High School in Denver, Colorado, which resulted in the critical wounding of students (and subsequent death of one) and

the death of the perpetrator. While depressing, it is nonetheless unknown if these shootings will continue.

This research project took an in depth look at the influence of concealed firearms on campus safety and security at Wyoming community college districts. It specifically analyzed the understandings, perceptions and attitudes of campus security directors related to concealed carried firearms. Every community college district in Wyoming has a policy prohibiting possession of firearms on campus. Nonetheless, several campus security directors indicated it would be “naïve” to think concealed firearms were not present. Yet no information was identified that firearms were actually used in campus crimes.

It became apparent that a critical aspect of campus security deals with a proactive, credible, and involved safety department. Campus security officers that are considered trustworthy and caring by the campus community are vitally important to firearm safety. It is important that those responsible for security on community college campuses be seen as more than rule enforcers. They must be viewed as caring, trustworthy, ethical, and credible persons who have a sincere concern about the campus community. Such an approach is consistent with the “community policing model” used by law enforcement professionals off college campuses. This proactive stance is far more important to campus security than the presence or absence of concealed carry firearms.

It is the involvement of campus security departments and their visibility that seems to be the crux of the campus firearm safety equation. Campus security officers need to exhibit trustworthiness and credibility. They must be viewed as caring by the campus community. They must put on security seminars for the campus community. They need take an interest in the students and employees of an institution. They need membership on students of concern

committees and other groups dealing with potential problems. A proactive stance by campus security departments could well be the most important aspect of institutional firearm safety.

If firearms are going to be allowed on campus, it should only happen if proper vetting and training is accomplished. It is only through such vetting and continuous training that campus safety can be enhanced. It is through vetting those persons allowed to carry; coupled with continuous training and oversight that the presence of concealed firearms might enhance campus firearm safety.

Campus administrators, executives, and decision makers must be concerned with the firearm safety of their institutions. They must be actively involved in the security of their campuses. Administrators and decision makers of institutions must give time, resources, attention, and thought to the issue of campus firearm safety. It is through this type of consideration that safer and more secure campuses, as related to firearms, can be achieved.

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APPENDIX A: APPROVED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions of Campus Security Directors

1. Please provide the following information:
 - a. Job title.
 - b. Job responsibilities.
2. Are you the person responsible for the safety and security of your institutional campuses?
 - a. How long have you been at this institution?
 - b. What is your professional background?
 - c. Are you the person responsible for allowing, or not, concealed carry firearms on your campus?
 - i. Wyoming Code: Title 6 Chapter 8 Article 104 (t) (x) reads: *(t) No person authorized to carry a concealed weapon.... Shall carry a concealed firearm into: (x) Any college or university facility without the written consent of the security service of the college or university;*
 - ii. Are you the person responsible for authorizing, or not, the carry of concealed firearms as noted by Wyoming statutes?
3. What are your perceptions concerning the presence of concealed carry firearms on your campus with regard to safety
 - a. [Prompt as necessary: Please elaborate]
 - b. What experiences have shaped these perceptions?
4. What are your perceptions concerning the absence of concealed carry firearms on your campus with regard to safety
 - a. [Prompt as necessary: Please elaborate]

- b. What experiences have shaped these perceptions?
5. How would the concealed carry of firearms influence the safety of your institution?
6. How do you deal with concealed carry firearms on your campus?
 - a. Why are concealed carry firearms dealt with in that manner?
 - b. In your experience and perceptions is this an appropriate way to deal with the concealed carry of firearms?
 - c. What part does your position play in determining appropriate way to deal with the concealed carry of firearms?
 - d. [Prompt as necessary]
7. How is institutional policy set concerning the concealed carry of firearms? I.e. President, BOT, Campus safety and security etc.
 - a. How does your position influence this policy
 - b. Prompt as necessary
8. Clery Act data for your institution as obtained at <http://ope.ed.gov/security/index.aspx> indicates the following information:
 - a. Disciplinary actions for weapons (both on campus and housing facilities):
 - b. Arrest for weapons (both on campus and housing facilities):
 - c. Crime (both on campus and housing facilities):
 - d. Can you speak to that information concerning
 - i. Firearm (weapons) possession
 - ii. Violent crime
 - e. How do you perceive the open carry of concealed firearms would influence these events?

9. Pursuant to the Clery Act, Wyoming showed the following for total incidents collected:

a. <http://ope.ed.gov/security/index.aspx>

b. Total, not average, collectible incidents:

Information that is required to be provided to a central clearinghouse pursuant to Clery Act Data:	All Wyoming 2009	C.C.	All Wyoming 2010	C.C.	All Wyoming 2011 Latest Available	C.C.
Disciplinary Actions On Campus: Weapons, carrying, possessing, etc	5		4		0	
Disciplinary Actions On Campus student Housing Facilities: Weapons, carrying, possessing, etc	2		3		0	
Arrests On Campus: Weapons, carrying, possessing, etc	4		2		1	

Arrests On Campus Student	0		0		0	
Housing Facilities: Weapons, carrying, possessing, etc						
Criminal Offenses On Campus and Housing Facilities (HF)						
1. Murder / Non Negligent homicide: Note that Casper College data for 2012 not included. One professor killed on campus another in her residence	0		0		0	
2. Negligent Manslaughter	0		0		0	
3. Sex Offenses Forcible	2 + 2 (HF)		4 + 4 (HF)		2 + 1 (HF)	
4. Sex Offenses Non Forcible	0		0		0	
5. Robbery	0		0		1	
6. Aggravated Assault	4 + 3 (HF)		2		5 + 1 (HF)	

7. Burglary	21 + 11 (HF)		28 + 9 (HF)		19 + 9 (HF)	
8. Motor Vehicle Theft	2		2		2	
9. Arson	1 + 1 (HF) & 1 public property		0		0	

10. Total Wyoming weapons disciplinary actions on campus and housing pursuant to the Clery Act for 2009, 2010, and 2011 is: 7, 7, & 0 respectively.

- a. For the same time period your institution shows: _____ respectively.
- b. Can you speak to why your institutions data is different than Wyoming data?

11. Total Wyoming weapons arrests on campus and housing pursuant to the Clery Act for 2009, 2010, and 2011 is: 4, 2, & 1 respectively.

- a. For the same time period your institution shows: _____ respectively.
- b. Can you speak to why your institutions data is different than Wyoming data?

12. Pursuant crime data collected and reported to the Clery Act, total Wyoming crimes for 2009, 2010 & 2011 is: 48, 49 & 40 respectively.

- a. For the same time period your institution shows:
_____ respectively.
- b. Can you speak to why your institutions data is different than Wyoming data?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add, that would help in understanding the relationship between campus safety and the concealed carry of firearms?
 - a. Please elaborate
 - b. [Prompt as necessary]
14. Other things you think are important?
15. Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX B

Memo Concerning Inter Coder Agreement

Also known was Cross Checking

As a Strategy of

Trustworthiness, Authenticity, and Credibility

I have reviewed codes and coding utilized in this research with the researcher. By participating in this inter coder agreement and cross checking; I believe that the codes utilized were appropriate. I further agree that the researcher used appropriate coding for interviews and their transcripts.

I was able to review codes in such a manner as to maintain confidentiality of participants.

Cohort 2009 Member Eric Heiser Education and Human Resource Studies

Member Colorado State University Education and Human Resource Studies 2009 Cohort

October 6th 2013

Date:

APPENDIX C

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Jeff Hosking and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the School of Education. We are conducting a research study on the carry of concealed firearms on Wyoming Community Colleges. The title of our project is: *Campus Security Directors Perceptions Concerning the Influence of Concealed Carry Firearms on Safety at Wyoming Public Community Colleges: A Phenomenological Study*. The Principal Investigator is *Dr. Jeff Foley, School of Education* and the Co-Principal Investigator is Jeff Hosking a PhD candidate in the School of Education.

We would like you to participate in a personal interview concerning this topic. The interview will occur on your campus or other convenient location. Participation will take approximately *30 to 90 minutes*. *Of course*, your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. However, you should know that because of the small number of community colleges in Wyoming it is possible you could be identified even without personal identifying data. For this study, we will assign a code to your data (i.e. 1A; 2B; etc.) so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the consent and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data.

While there are no direct benefits to you, we hope to gain more knowledge on this study. However you will be provided information concerning this study. The anticipated benefits of this study will improve safety at Wyoming community colleges. It is further anticipated that this information will be widely disseminated inside and outside the state of Wyoming as well. It is hoped this research will help campus security directors everywhere to improve safety on their campuses as it relates to the concealed carry of firearms.

There are no known risks accompanying this research study. However, it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

If you would like to participate or have any questions about this research, please contact me, Jeff Hosking at jhosking@cwcc.edu or (307) 855 2135 by telephone. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, CSU Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1655.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hosking
(Co Principal Investigator)
PhD Candidate
Colorado State University
Professor of Criminal Justice
Central Wyoming College
(307) 855 2135
jhosking@cwcc.edu

Dr. Jeff Foley
(Principal Investigator)
School of Education
Colorado State University

Institutional Review Board
13 – 4167H

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University**

TITLE OF STUDY: Campus Security Directors Perceptions Concerning the Influence of Concealed Carry Firearms on Safety at Wyoming Public Community Colleges: A Phenomenological Study

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jeff Foley, PhD, jeffrey.foley@colostate.edu; (970) 491-6289; School of Education; Colorado State University

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jeff Hosking, J. D.; jhosking@cwcc.edu; (307) 855-2135; Central Wyoming College

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? You are being invited to participate in this research because of your position on a Wyoming community college campus. Whatever your specific title might be, you are in the position responsible for allowing, or not, concealed firearms on your campus.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? This research is being done to form the basis of a PhD dissertation. Research will be conducted by PhD candidate Jeff Hosking.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this study is to determine what those persons in the position of a campus safety and security director think about the concealed carry of firearms on their campus (es).

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? This study is anticipated to occur on your campus and take approximately 30 to 90 minutes for a personal interview. If this interview does not take place on your campus it will occur at another location convenient to you. You may also be asked to clarify some of your comments in a brief follow - up interview. Your total time commitment will be no more than 2 hours.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? You will be asked to discuss your perceptions and thoughts concerning the concealed carry of firearms on your campus (es). The interview will be audiotaped. You can choose not to answer any question that you would prefer not to answer, and you can tell the researcher at any time that you would like certain comments to be considered "off the record." We may wish to contact you again to clarify comments made during your interview.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? You should only participate in this research if you are in a position responsible for allowing, or not, concealed firearms on your campus.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? There are no known risks for this research. However, it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but

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the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no direct benefits to the participants. However you will be provided information concerning this study. The anticipated benefits of this study will improve safety at Wyoming community colleges. It is further anticipated that this information will be widely disseminated inside and outside the state of Wyoming as well. It is hoped this research will help campus security directors everywhere to improve safety on their campuses as it relates to the concealed carry of firearms.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. When we share the data with other researchers, we will not include your name or your institution; however, you should know that because of the small number of community colleges in Wyoming it is possible you could be identified even without personal identifying data.

For this study, we will assign a code to your data (i.e. 1A; 2B; etc.) so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the consent and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary.

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court OR to tell authorities. As an example, this information would be provided pursuant to a valid court subpoena. This could occur in a legitimate administrative, criminal or civil matter. In such, or similar, situation a legal obligation would exist to share this information with others.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS? Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Dr. Jeff Foley at (970) 491-6289. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on April 10, 2013.

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WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

The personal interview will be audio taped. Only the researcher, and briefly, a professional transcription service, will have access to the audiotape. Once the audiotape is transcribed and returned, only the researcher will have access to the audio tape and transcripts. This recording will be kept secure for a period of 3 years pursuant to Colorado State University protocol. In addition the transcript from this audio recording will likewise be kept secure for 3 years pursuant to Colorado State University protocol. If deemed appropriate by the researcher, you may be re contacted following the initial interview to confirm accuracy concerning portions or entirety of the final report. This may or not occur, but as a participant you should be aware of its possibility.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff

APPENDIX D



Local Discovery...Global Impact

Research Integrity & Compliance Review Office
Office of Vice President for Research
321 General Services Building
Fort Collins, CO 80523-2011
Voice: 970-491-1553
Fax: 970-491-2293

Training Certificate and IRB Resources

Congratulations on completing your CITI training. Attached you will find a CSU CITI certificate of completion. Please note the expiration date on the certificate. Training must be updated every three (3) years.

Resources for Human Subjects Research are available at our website:
<http://web.research.colostate.edu/ricro/hrc/hrc.aspx>. Here you will find resources such as:

- The Belmont Report
- Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46
- Exemption Criteria
- Expedite Criteria
- Elements of Consent

If you are ready to submit a new protocol, the IRB has an online protocol submission-and-review system, eProtocol. <https://csu.keyusa.net/> (login with your CSU eID and password)

If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to contact Janell.Barker@Colostate.edu 970-491-1655 or Evelyn.Swiss@colostate.edu (970-491-1381).

Sincerely,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is "Janell Barker" and the second is "Evelyn Swiss".

Animal Care & Use • Drug Review • Human Research • Institutional Biosafety • Misconduct in Science
<http://ricro.research.colostate.edu>

APPENDIX E

Wyoming Code Annotated: Title 6, Chapter 8, Section 104, Sub section (t)

(t) No person authorized to carry a concealed weapon pursuant to paragraphs (a) (ii) through (iv) of this section shall carry a concealed firearm into:

(i) Any facility used primarily for law enforcement operations or administration without the written consent of the chief administrator;

(ii) Any detention facility, prison or jail;

(iii) Any courtroom, except that nothing in this section shall preclude a judge from carrying a concealed weapon or determining who will carry a concealed weapon in the courtroom;

(iv) Any meeting of a governmental entity;

(v) Any meeting of the legislature or a committee thereof;

(vi) Any school, college or professional athletic event not related to firearms;

(vii) Any portion of an establishment licensed to dispense alcoholic liquor and malt beverages for consumption on the premises, which portion of the establishment is primarily devoted to that purpose;

(viii) Any place where persons are assembled for public worship, without the written consent of the chief administrator of that place;

(ix) Any elementary or secondary school facility;

(x) Any college or university facility without the written consent of the security service of the college or university; or

(xi) Any place where the carrying of firearms is prohibited by federal law or regulation or state law.

APPENDIX F

Memo Concerning

Peer Review and Debriefing

As a Strategy of

Trustworthiness, Authenticity, and Credibility

I reviewed this qualitative study and was provided the opportunity to ask questions. After this review I determined that this account resonated with me. It is my opinion that this qualitative study will resonates with many people, not just the researcher.

I was able to review this relevant account in such a manner as to maintain confidentiality of participants.

Cohort 2009 Member Danny Gillum Education and Human Resource Studies

Member Colorado State University Education and Human Resource Studies 2009 Cohort

October 17th 2013

Date: